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THE DAY AMERICA WAS ATTACKED

"We expected them to come back. I thought the Japanese would take over Pearl and probably the States"

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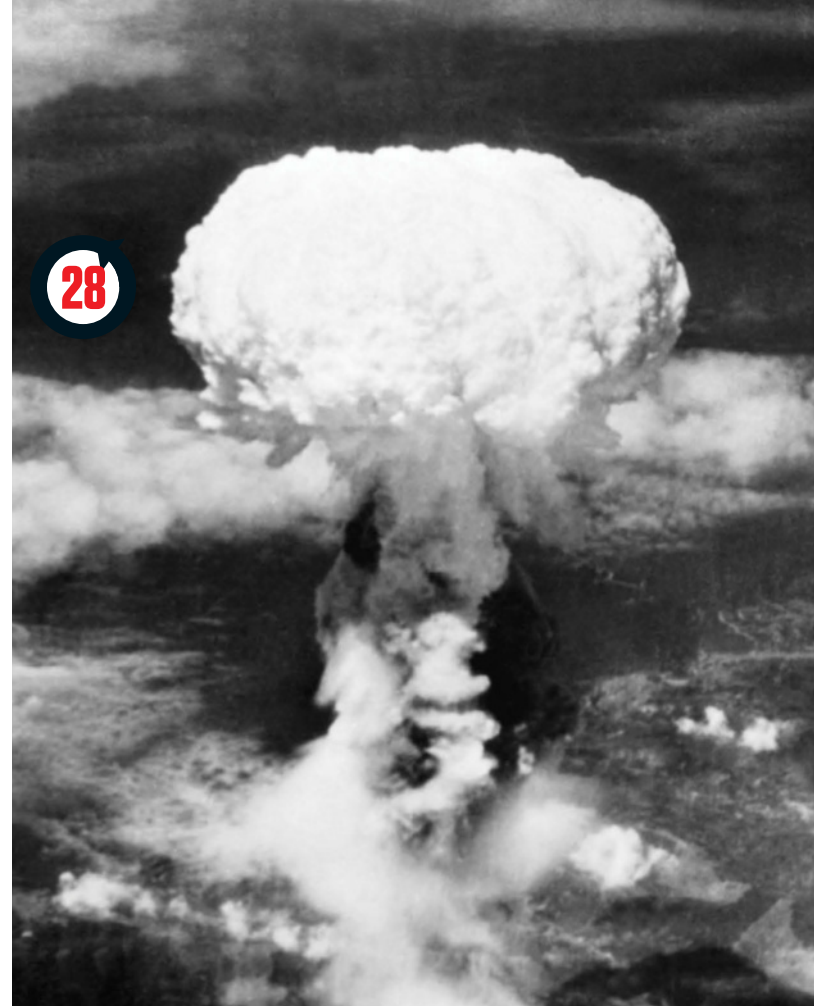
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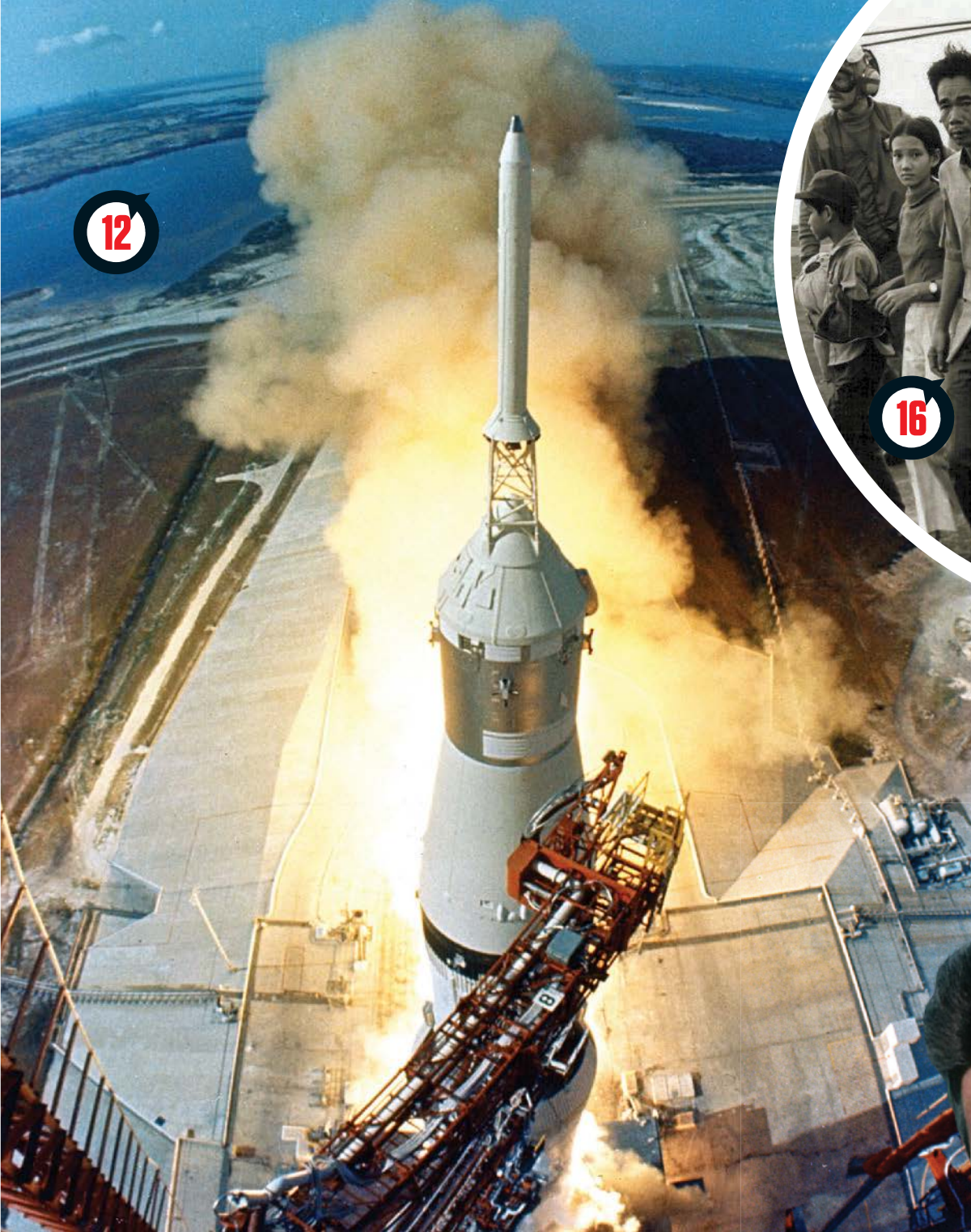
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Pearl Harbor

HAWAII, USA, 7 DECEMBER 1941

Written by Jonathan O'Callaghan

CHARLES EUGENE EBEL



Now 94 years of age Charles Ebel, from Guilderland, New York, was serving as a seaman first class aboard the USS Curtiss, a seaplane tender, when Japanese warplanes attacked the US naval base at Pearl Harbor. From his unique vantage point across Ford Island, Ebel saw many ships sunk in the most deadly foreign attack on American soil until 11 September 2001.

“ We expected them to come back. I thought the Japanese would take over Pearl and probably the States ”

On the morning of 7 December 1941, Charles Eugene Ebel and a friend were getting ready to go surfing at Waikiki Beach, totally oblivious of the horror that was heading their way.

“My buddy and I were learning to surf,” said Ebel. “We’d ride these [3.6-metre] 12-foot bores and sometimes you’d be on one wave and your board would be on another, so you’re just trying to catch it.”

And then, in the blink of an eye, everything changed. “I was looking out the hatch [aboard the USS Curtiss] and I heard this roar, and I just saw a plane drop a bomb right onto that poor island where the planes were. And then he came back by the hatch I was standing in, so he was side on, and he had this big smile [on his face]. He went up the channel - he was looking for another target, I guess - and that was the start of it. From then on you knew it was [going to be] tough.”

Ebel sprung to action. Once all hell had broken loose, his captain told him to head to the main deck to see if there was anything he could do. There was one machine gun on the deck which was unmanned. “In one flowing moment I jumped onto it and fired that for a while,” said Ebel. “If there was any goal it was to stay alive.”

What had started as just another day for Ebel in the idyllic setting of Honolulu in Hawaii turned out to be




the scene for the greatest loss of life on American soil at foreign hands until 9/11 60 years later. Around 2,400 Americans were killed and 1,200 wounded.

In the months prior to Pearl Harbor, Ebel had been on cruisers in the South Pacific. On 6 December his ship, the USS Curtiss, had dropped gas off at Wake Island north of the Marshall Islands. A last-minute decision saw the Curtiss head for Honolulu. Upon arrival another ship had taken the Curtiss’s berthing point near Pearl Harbor, so the captain ordered the ship to swing around behind Ford Island (see map). On the way the Curtiss picked up 378,540 litres (100,000 gallons) of gasoline, before berthing at night on 6 December 1941.

When the attack broke out, the Curtiss was somewhat fortunate with its position. Its berthing point was far enough away from Pearl Harbor to avoid the majority of the Japanese onslaught, however the horrors they witnessed were anything but fortunate.

As Ebel explains though, they weren’t completely removed from the action. “Our ship got credit for shooting down three planes and partial credit for a submarine,” he said. “When we were in battle this submarine popped up behind us, and so we fired over the top of the sub. It went down but when it came back up it let go of a torpedo and it went right by our ship

The day America was attacked

- HST**
- 3:42am** • The minesweeper ship **Condor spots a sub 3.2km (2mi) from Pearl Harbor and sends a warning to the USS Ward** 
 - 6:10am** • **183 fighters, bombers and torpedo planes take off from Japanese aircraft carriers north of Oahu**
 - 7:02am** • **First sighting**
The Opana Radar Station on Oahu spots more than 50 aircraft bearing down on them, much to the incredulity of the two privates on duty
 - 7:20am** • **A lieutenant incorrectly believes the planes sighted by the radar station to be US B-17 bombers, and fatally dismisses the warning**
 - 7:40am** • **Japanese planes bear down on Pearl Harbor as the clouds clear** 
 - 7:55am** • **Airfield attack**
The Japanese first bomb the US Air Force's Wheeler Field, north of Pearl Harbor, destroying most of the US warplanes on the ground
 - 8am** • **Most of a squadron of 12 unarmed American B-17s manage to land at Oahu not initially aware that Japan was attacking. One of the B-17s touches down on a golf course**
 - 8:10am** • **Sinking Arizona**
A bomb hits the USS Arizona, setting off 450,000kg (1mn lb) of gunpowder and instantly destroying the ship, along with 1,177 crew on board
 - 8:12am** • **The USS Utah is scuppered** 
 - 8:54am** • **The second wave of Japanese fighters arrives, attacking the navy yard dry dock and other ships**
 - 10am** • **Third wave called off**
A third Japanese strike is rejected by superiors, believing the earlier attacks have done enough damage
 - 1pm** • **The Japanese aircraft carriers head for home, with over 2,400 US soldiers left dead**

about [3.6 metres] 12 feet out. It felt like it was closer, but they always look closer in your mind. The torpedo went up the channel, I don't know where it ended up, but there was a destroyer in the channel and the submarine ran at the sight of him. It went down and never came back up again. That was the start of everything big."

As mentioned, the Curtiss had just picked up thousands of gallons of gasoline, and Ebel was all too aware of the fact that he was essentially standing on top a massive bomb: "There was a joke I always remember I said to my buddy. I asked him where he was going and he said to get a life jacket. I said, 'See if you can find me a parachute - that life jacket isn't going to be much help when that gas

goes off!'" Fortunately, the gasoline never ignited and the Curtiss survived.

Ebel saw a lot of his friends perish on the Curtiss; in total 19 would die on the ship, with many more wounded. At the time though, he was forced to hide any nerves he might have. "We were all accustomed to the drills," Ebel explained, "but when you get the real thing anything can happen. I was always composed pretty well, I was only a tiny bit nervous. It's part of the battle, I guess. You just get going and do your job, that's all. What else are you going to do?"

The attack itself ignited an almost psychotic fury within some of the American soldiers, highlighted by a grisly moment aboard the Curtiss. When a Japanese dive-bomber hit a crane on the Curtiss and crashed onto the deck, Ebel witnessed first-hand the extent of his fellow compatriots' anger. "When the plane hit the crane [the pilot's] head came off and skated across the deck," states Ebel. "Our guys were vicious and they started trying to pull out his teeth with a pair of pliers. That always stood out because I was just 20 turning 21 and stuff like that bothered me. After a while you realise [the enemy is] just another person."

With the attack fully underway, the Curtiss was dealt a stroke of fortune. A bomb had shattered the mooring on the back of the ship and, according to Ebel, "We were swinging around, and that helped us because if [the planes] passed us once then when they came back [on an attack run] we might have a different position." But while they were

Sailors at Ford Island air base stand amid plane wreckage



Captured from a Japanese aircraft, this image shows several vessels on Battleship Row under fire from torpedo planes



"Our guys were vicious... they started trying to pull out his teeth with a pair of pliers. That always stood out because I was just 20"

spared the full brunt of the Japanese assault, Ebel had an unwanted vantage point of what was happening around the rest of the harbour.

"The sky was full of them - they were like bees," recalls Ebel. "There were planes everywhere. This torpedo plane went right by us and sunk the USS Utah, and I saw when they dropped a bomb on the USS Arizona; it went right down the smoke stack and it blew it right out of the water." The surprise nature of the raid was the main reason so many of the ships would be sunk, according to Ebel: "The Japanese got to our ships with the watertight doors all open - that's why they sunk them, otherwise you couldn't. They could shoot the whole top of a ship away and it still wouldn't sink because they've got watertight doors like air pockets, and that's what keeps them afloat."

But as suddenly as the attack had begun that morning, around an hour later "they stopped all at once". Ebel and his crew, however, as you'd expect, remained on high alert. Some, including Ebel, even anticipated that Pearl Harbor was only a precursor to an invasion of the American mainland. "We expected them to come back," said Ebel. "I thought the Japanese would take over Pearl [Harbor] and probably the States."

"I always figured they could take the US over easy because they had the most aircraft carriers of anywhere in the world, and all they had to do was send one to Seattle and one to San Diego and nobody could stop them because [the US military was mostly] in Hawaii or other places. We never had much protection [in the USA during WWII]. They made a big mistake [in not coming back to take Pearl]; they lost the war right there. They might have won it. I don't know if they could have kept Hawaii or not, but if they'd gone to the States it would have been a different story. I'm glad they didn't."



Over 1,100 US Marines were killed on the USS Arizona

For many of the Pearl Harbor survivors, the eventual Allied victory in the war four years later brought little consolation for what had happened on that tragic day. "I just feel sorry for all those people that got killed," Ebel tells us. "There was a cemetery up on a hill there in Hawaii. They used to dig these big long trenches and all these bodies sewn up in canvas bags would just get dropped in and they'd put up a cross. They didn't know who they were. It went for as far as you could see. I remember that - it never goes away. In the back of your mind, it's always there. I wish I didn't see it but I did."

The attack on Pearl Harbor took place over seven decades ago, and thus many of the survivors have since passed away. Those remaining though, like Ebel, are still struggling to come to terms with the events of that winter's morning in 1941. "It doesn't prey on my mind all the time like it used to," he said. "I used to walk down the street and somebody would slam a car door and I'd jump. Not any more. I don't have any nightmares about it like I used to. But you never get over it."

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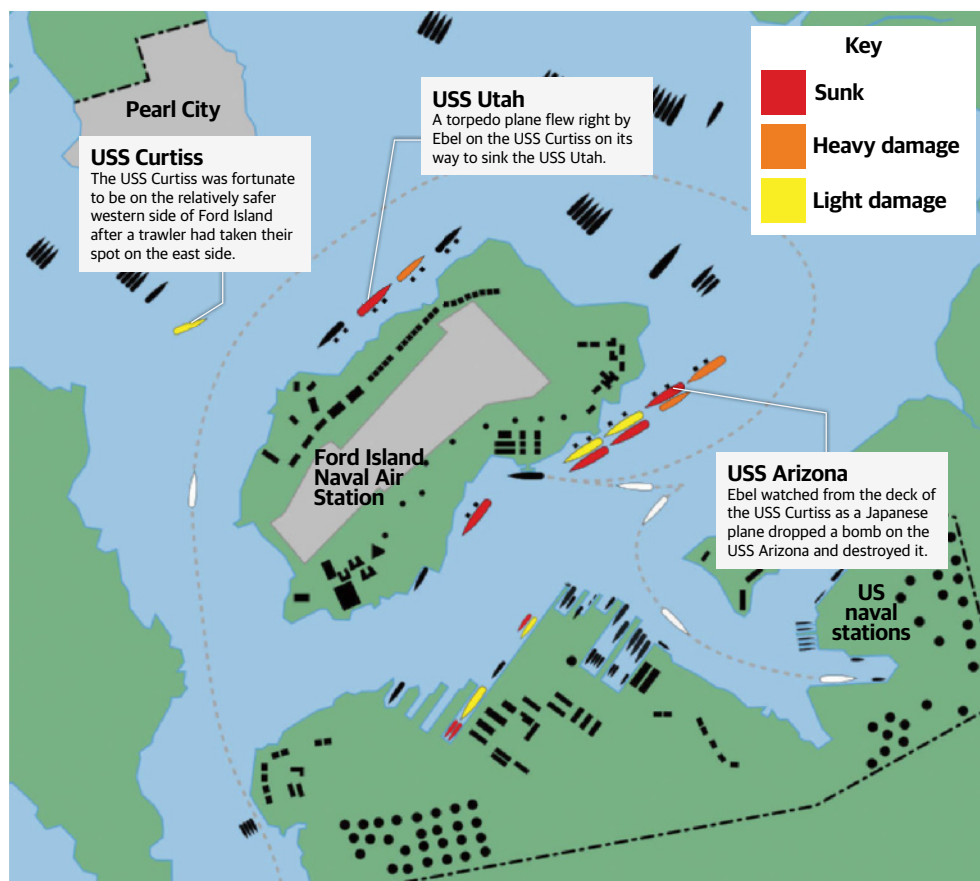
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Origins and aftermath

The attack on Pearl Harbor was a shock to America. Despite the country's reluctance to enter into World War II, the Japanese had feared America would at some point join the Allies and, in an effort to quell their expected entrance into the global conflict, they intended to cripple the US Pacific Fleet to ensure they would not pose any threat to Japan in South-east Asia. The plan, however, failed to quell the US and instead only achieved the result of incurring the full wrath of the American military, which the Japanese would feel the brunt of culminating in the two atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. For all those at Pearl Harbor, it was a terrifying experience that has stayed with them ever since.



The atomic bombs used on Japan were one major consequence of Pearl Harbor





An IRA suspect is apprehended by a British soldier during Bloody Sunday in Derry, Northern Ireland on 30 January 1972

Bloody Sunday

DERRY, NORTHERN IRELAND, 30 JANUARY 1972

Written by Chris Fenton

SIMON WINCHESTER OBE



Simon Winchester is a renowned journalist and writer who has covered news stories and global events throughout the world. Educated at Oxford he initially worked for the Canadian mining company, Falconbridge of Africa, before he got a job as a journalist on *The Journal* in Newcastle Upon Tyne. In 1969 he joined *The Guardian* and covered numerous world events including the creation of Bangladesh and the Watergate scandal in Washington DC.

“Once I realised later in the evening how many people had been killed then the questions started... why would they do such a thing?”

It was a cold, frosty morning on Sunday 30 January 1972. Simon Winchester, reporting for *The Guardian* on the troubles in Northern Ireland for nearly two years, was driving to Derry from Belfast to cover the demonstration on civil rights in the city. It was expected to be a dramatic day. He'd already phoned *The Guardian* Newsdesk in Manchester to be prepared for a page-one story. "I arrived very early that morning, checked into the city hotel and went straight down into the Bogside," explains Winchester. The city hotel was also where Ivan Cooper, a founding member of the Social Democratic and Labour Party, who was managing the demonstration, had hastily changed the route of the march to avoid a confrontation with the British Army.

The march would now be heading to Free Derry Corner in the catholic Bogside area of the city, not the Guildhall within the city walls. The British Army was everywhere in the city and had barricaded all the entrances to the city centre along the city walls to prevent the marchers from getting to the Guildhall. There had been a particularly nasty incident between civil rights protestors and the British Army the week before, prompting the change of plans from the march organisers. The discovery of an internment camp at Magilligan on Lough Foyle shore, for mostly catholic prisoners who hadn't been given trials, ended in violence when British troops from the Parachute Regiment dispersed the protestors on the beach with batons and rubber bullets, causing severe injuries. "The whole affair of the week before created a testy and pretty hostile

atmosphere within the city. In other words it wasn't all sweetness and light, particularly in the Bogside," Winchester recalls. The British Army was also tense, having been subjected to verbal abuse, stone-throwing, rioting and casualties throughout Ulster: "Within the wall, the military was in a no-nonsense kind of mood."

Winchester quickly found the marchers on the Creggan Estate and followed them as they made their way towards William Street and the junction to Free Derry Corner. The marchers were following a coal lorry where influential civil rights speakers and MPs were encouraging the crowd. Much of the crowd were dressed in their sunday best, having just come out of services from the local church. Winchester decided that he would try to fall out of the crowd and get a better perspective from the barricades: "I followed the march for quite a while, then, like all reporters, you dodge about and I then tried to get through one of the barricades. They [the British Army] told me I was to stay put, they were pretty unpleasant about." In a later report to *The Guardian*, Winchester noted that they told him to 'stay and take what's coming to you'. As he made his way back towards the Bogside and the marchers he noticed that "a pretty hostile mood was developing".

Marchers reached the William Street/Rossville Street junction at around 3.35pm. At the bottom of Rossville Street lay Free Derry Corner and the catholic heart of Derry; the official end point of the march. Just past the junction, on William Street, was Barrier 14, with the British Army preventing the march continuing on to

The Bloody Sunday massacre

- CST**
- 07-00am** • **British Army units set up barricades around the centre of Derry**
 - 10-00am** • **March organisers announce a change in the route of the march to Free Derry Corner**
 - 02-45pm** • **Marchers begin to gather on Bishop's Field in the Creggan area of the city**
 - 03-00pm** • **The march into the Derry**
Marchers set off in the direction of the Guildhall to William Street
 - 03-15pm** • **Marchers enter William Street and head towards Rossville Street and Barrier 14**
 - 03-35pm** • **The march splits up**
Marchers reach the Rossville Street junction. Stewards try to stop them reaching the Guildhall
 - 03-37pm** • **Marchers funnel into Rossville Street but a large element confronts the Royal Green Jackets at Barrier 14**
 - 03-40pm** • **The crowd is told to disperse**
Inspector Jankin of the Royal Ulster Constabulary announces that the march is illegal
 - 03-45pm** • **Water cannon is used on the crowd at Barrier 14, but rioting continues in that area**
 - 03-55pm** • **The scooper operation**
Colonel Derek Wilford requests a green light for an arrest operation. He is told to wait
 - 03-55pm** • **Wilford reports his soldiers have opened fire, hitting two marchers in William Street**
 - 04-05pm** • **Neptune at discretion**
Water cannon is used again to try to disperse the enraged rioters
 - 04-07pm** • **Brigadier MacLellan, head of the Derry operation, orders the Paras not to advance down Rossville Street**
 - 04-07pm** • **Failure to follow orders**
Wilford deploys one company through Barrier 14 and deploys a support company in APCs onto Rossville Street
 - 04-10pm** • **General panic ensues down Rossville street as rioters run into peaceful marchers**
 - 04-10pm** • **Paras open fire**
Paras open fire after suspected gunfire is heard. This goes on for nearly 30 minutes
 - 04-40pm** • **A ceasefire is ordered. No casualties are sustained by the Paras and no weapons are found. 13 residents lie dead**

the city centre. The lorry directing the marchers turned right down Rossville Street but many carried on towards Barrier 14 and started to confront the soldiers guarding the barricade. Winchester headed away from the riot that was now developing on William Street and walked down towards the speakers at the bottom of Rossville Street.

Unknown to the marchers or Winchester, who was now caught between the civil rights speeches going on in Rossville Street and the riot breaking out in William Street, the Army had put a plan together to 'scoop up' the rioters at Barrier 14. The Parachute Regiment was to move in and conduct an arrest operation if there was a clear separation between marchers and rioters. This was not uncommon, as Winchester points out: "There was separation between the riot going on in William Street and the peaceful protest going on in Rossville Street... I had been to many demonstrations beforehand and there were snatch squads - very fit young soldiers would run in and try to collar the miscreants, or hit them with batons, or else they would fire tear gas... I wasn't expecting the Army to do anything more than this, however." The arrest operation had strict instructions from the operation commander, Brigadier Patrick MacLellan; they were to go through Barrier 14, but to stay in William Street and not to 'conduct a running battle down Rossville Street'.

A suspected miscommunication of orders from British Army HQ to 1 Para meant that instead of following MacLellan's instruction, Derek Wilford, commander of 1 Para, threw armoured vehicles through Barrier 12 and soldiers on foot through Barrier 14, straight into retreating crowds pouring into Rossville Street. The Saville Report later found that Wilford disobeyed orders in leading troops and armoured vehicles into Rossville Street. People were shocked and started to panic. Winchester and the crowd immediately started to run back and he recalls that "at this point I think the crowd

was incredulous." It was highly unusual for the Army to come so far into the Bogside, much less start to take up firing positions. When shots rang out from the soldiers, screams from the marchers near the lorry pierced the air and everyone ducked. "I think most people, including myself, were shocked. It was quite extraordinary that they were behaving the way that they were". Winchester immediately ran for cover. "I saw a soldier pointing his rifle towards me, I saw him, moved and then there were flakes of stone coming off the wall behind me... I was wearing a sort of barber jacket and karki trousers which could have looked vaguely military I suppose."

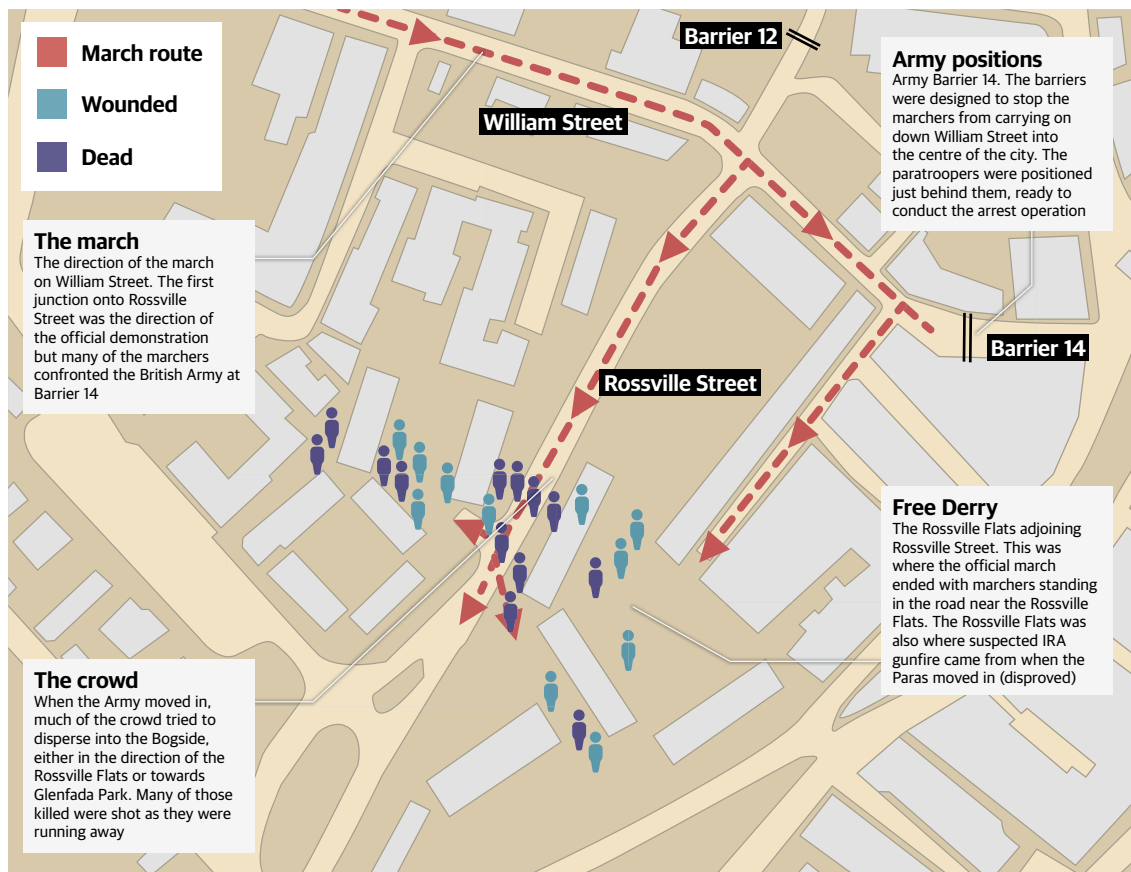
Between the barrage of gunfire, Winchester ran into the urban maze that was the Bogside. "I ran towards the [city] wall and took shelter in a church with other people sheltering there." The paratroopers were taking aimed shots at the crowd that was now trying to find cover behind rubble scattered around Rossville Street. As Winchester started out again following the city walls, trying to dodge the Army barricades, he saw something unusual: "A civilian with a rifle coming from the city walls from the Loyalist side of town. I made a note of it, but I didn't put much emphasis on it - it was a very confusing time." Whether he was a loyalist or republican,



A British soldier covers his fellow soldiers while they investigate a burning building



Marchers confront the British Army behind one of the makeshift barriers, throwing various missiles



Origins and aftermath

Bloody Sunday was a horrifying incident that occurred within the collective period known as The Troubles in Northern Ireland – a struggle between catholic and protestant paramilitary organisations in the province from the mid-Sixties to 1998. It also represents the conflict between the republican IRA, who loosely supported the catholic communities, to end British rule for good in Ireland and the British Army ostensibly sent by the British government to keep the peace. The conflict originated from the separation of catholic-dominated southern Ireland, which became independent from Britain in 1948, and protestant-controlled Ulster, which wanted to remain part of the United Kingdom. There was still a catholic minority living in Northern Ireland and the protestant-dominated Stormont government controlling the province feared they might try to take control and unite Ireland under republican rule from Dublin. An oppressive series of restrictions were introduced by Stormont, preventing catholics from getting certain jobs, being allocated proper social housing and voting in fair elections. Stormont also established an all-protestant police force which, under special powers, could arrest and imprison anyone they wanted without trial. In the weeks leading up to Bloody Sunday, the British Army had begun heavy-handed arrests of suspected IRA members, destroying any trust the catholic community had for the Army, and had intensified the internment without trial policy. In the aftermath of Bloody Sunday, the IRA would step up its campaign of targeting British Army positions around the province and the catholics and protestants would become even more polarised, facilitating more violence.

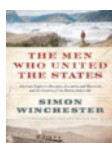
“When shots rang out from the soldiers, screams from the marchers near the lorry pierced the air and everyone ducked”

Winchester never found out, but the whole of the Bogside was now resembling a war zone. He managed to work his way through the streets and passed the old walls as the gunshots rang out from Rossville Street. He finally made it past the city walls and back to the comparative safety of his hotel: “I wasn’t allowed to talk to any of the squaddies after the shooting, but the official explanation said things we knew not to be true – the crucial point to all of this was how much fire they [the British Army] were taking from the crowd.” The Army justified the shootings in Rossville Street by the ‘Yellow Card’ system, soldiers returning fire having been fired upon. Despite the presence of IRA gunman in the area, and one round being fired at paratroopers in William Street after soldiers shot two marchers before they went into Rossville Street, the Saville Report concluded that the killings in Rossville Street and the surrounding area were unjustified.

Winchester was able to talk to the march organisers before he made his final report to *The Guardian* Newsdesk. “They were all horrified, puzzled, shocked, dismayed and distressed that such a thing would happen. They expected bloody noses, they expected tear gas, they expected a few broken bones but to think that people would actually be killed by high-power rifles – well it changed everything. Up until that point there

had been a lot of bombing mayhem, agro of one sort of another – suddenly it had entered a new dimension.” He phoned the hospital to find out how many people were injured and was told that 13 civilians were dead. “Once I realised how many people had been killed the questions started; why would they do such a thing?”

As the Sun set on Derry, Winchester took in the scene: “The Moon was rising. It was clear, frosty... and the city was aghast at what had happened. It was the numbers. I remember standing in that telephone box talking to the secretary at the hospital as he was saying: ‘We’ve got 13 bodies here’. I know 13 doesn’t sound a lot, but back then 13 people being shot dead by the British Army in an Anglo-Irish city – it was unthinkable.”



Simon Winchester’s latest book, *The Men Who United the States* is released on 11 November in the UK, published by Harper Collins. It’s available now for pre-order at www.amazon.com

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Lord Mountbatten, along with three other people, was assassinated by the Provisional IRA, in 1979

© Alamy, Corbis, Getty



*Task Accomplished.....
July, 1969*



NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION

Apollo 11

THE MOON, 20 JULY 1969

Written by Jonathan O'Callaghan

JACK GARMAN



John R 'Jack' Garman is a computer engineer who worked at NASA from 1966

to 2000. In 1969 he was a key figure in the Apollo 11 lunar landing, responsible for overseeing the primitive computer onboard the spacecraft. Now retired, Garman had a long and fruitful career at NASA, although perhaps no mission was as important as Apollo 11.

“It was a very euphoric kind of atmosphere; by jove, we actually did it, they actually landed on the Moon”

At 8.18pm (GMT) on 20 July 1969, Americans Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin became the first humans to land on the Moon. It is arguably mankind's greatest accomplishment to date, but over 380,000 kilometres (240,000 miles) away, those people in NASA's Mission Control Center at the Johnson Space Center in Houston, Texas, were celebrating out of relief as much as joy, having just overcome one of the most difficult and technical missions in human history. Inside Mission Control, computer engineer Jack Garman was at the heart of the celebrations, having just saved the mission from disaster minutes prior to the landing.

At the time of the Apollo 11 landing, Garman was very young in comparison to his colleagues. He'd joined NASA as a fresh-faced 21-year-old in 1966, straight out of college. Within just three years he had acclimatised himself with the workings of the computer that would power and control the Apollo 11 spacecraft, and on the day of the landing was tasked with watching over those computers to ensure the landing went without a hitch. These computers were rudimentary at best in nature, though and not easy to operate.

"It was strange, different, to have a system, a vehicle, that was run by computer. I mean, today even our cars are run by computers, but back then almost all the systems were analogue," explains Garman as he tells us about his work in Mission Control: "They wanted a so-called expert in the control centre, so they gave me a

council in the Apollo Guidance Computer support room and that's where I spent a lot of time during most of the flights to the Moon."

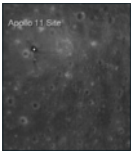
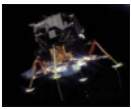
On the day of the landing, Mission Control was bustling and buzzing with hundreds of people: "During the landing itself I remember that when they got near the lunar surface, Buzz Aldrin made a call-out saying [softly]: 'We've got dust now,'" Garman tells us. "The descent engine was firing up dust from the lunar surface. With all the simulations we'd been through it was kind of like a script, but he'd never made that call before! He didn't follow the script! That was an awakening. I mean, you knew it was real, but still, wow! This is it, they're about to land."

It turns out though, that as they were preparing to land, unbeknownst to the astronauts, Garman had performed some vital preparations that would ensure the mission could continue and history would be made that night. Garman and his team were responsible for ensuring they could overcome any programme alarm that might be thrown up by the primitive computer, but one alarm still seemingly stumped some of the brightest minds ever assembled.

During one simulation prior to the landing a computer alarm came up, known as a '1202 alarm', which Garman and his team hadn't seen before. His superior at the time, guidance officer Steve Bales, called for an abort. "Afterwards Gene Kranz, who was the flight director for the Apollo 11 landing, boy did he get mad," explains

How the Moon landing unfolded

- 17:44pm GMT** • **The Lunar Module separates from the Command and Service Module in lunar orbit.**
- 19:08pm** • **Moon descent**
Armstrong and Aldrin begin their descent to the lunar surface.
- 20:04pm** • **The Lunar Module is now just 15,200m (50,000ft) from the surface.**
- 20:10pm** • **The lunar module descends to 9,100m (30,000ft).**
- 20:14pm** • **Threat to mission**
The 1202 programme alarm flashes up, but Jack Garman realises it is safe to continue.
- 20:15pm** • **Armstrong and Aldrin pick a new landing site having lost track of their location during the alarm.**
- 20:16pm** • **The low-fuel quantity light flashes on, meaning the crew has just seconds' worth of fuel to land the Lunar Module.**
- 20:16pm** • **Finally dust is kicked up by the vehicle, meaning the landing is just seconds away.**
- 20:17pm** • **Armstrong and Aldrin successfully land on the lunar surface, the first humans to land on another world.**
- 22:12pm** • **For the next few hours the crew performs checks on the spacecraft.**
- 23:43pm** • **One small step**
Armstrong prepares for the first lunar spacewalk and three hours later he becomes the first human to walk on the Moon. Aldrin follows half an hour later.



Garman. "He was all over the simulation guys for putting in a simulation that caused an abort this close to the real flight. And the simulation guys said: 'Uh uh, wrongo bongo fella, you're supposed to recover from this.' After the debriefing, oh boy, did the fur fly."

Kranz told Garman to make sure he knew every possible programme alarm that could come up. So the young computer engineer studied them all and drew himself a cheat sheet he could refer to during the mission. It just so happened that Garman's diligence in doing his homework helped save the mission when it was just minutes away from landing.

During the mission, as Armstrong and Aldrin were descending to the lunar surface, an error reading came up that suggested the on-board computer was running over capacity, the same 1202 alarm that had come up during the simulation. As had been witnessed in the simulation, such a reading was a cause to abort the mission, as Aldrin and Armstrong would not be able to operate the Lunar Module if the computer was not working. Thanks to the flight director's insistence that he brushed up on programming alarms, Garman was the only person in the room who knew this alarm was no reason to abort the mission, and he quickly let his superiors know.

"I looked down at the cheat sheet, saw what [the alarm] was and told them it was okay," says Garman: "As long as there weren't other indications like that the computer was guiding the vehicle to turn upside down or something, we were go. And that's the call they made."



The swing arms move away and a plume of flame signals the liftoff of Apollo 11



NASA Mission Control during the Apollo 11 mission - Jack Garman was regularly in this room during the mission

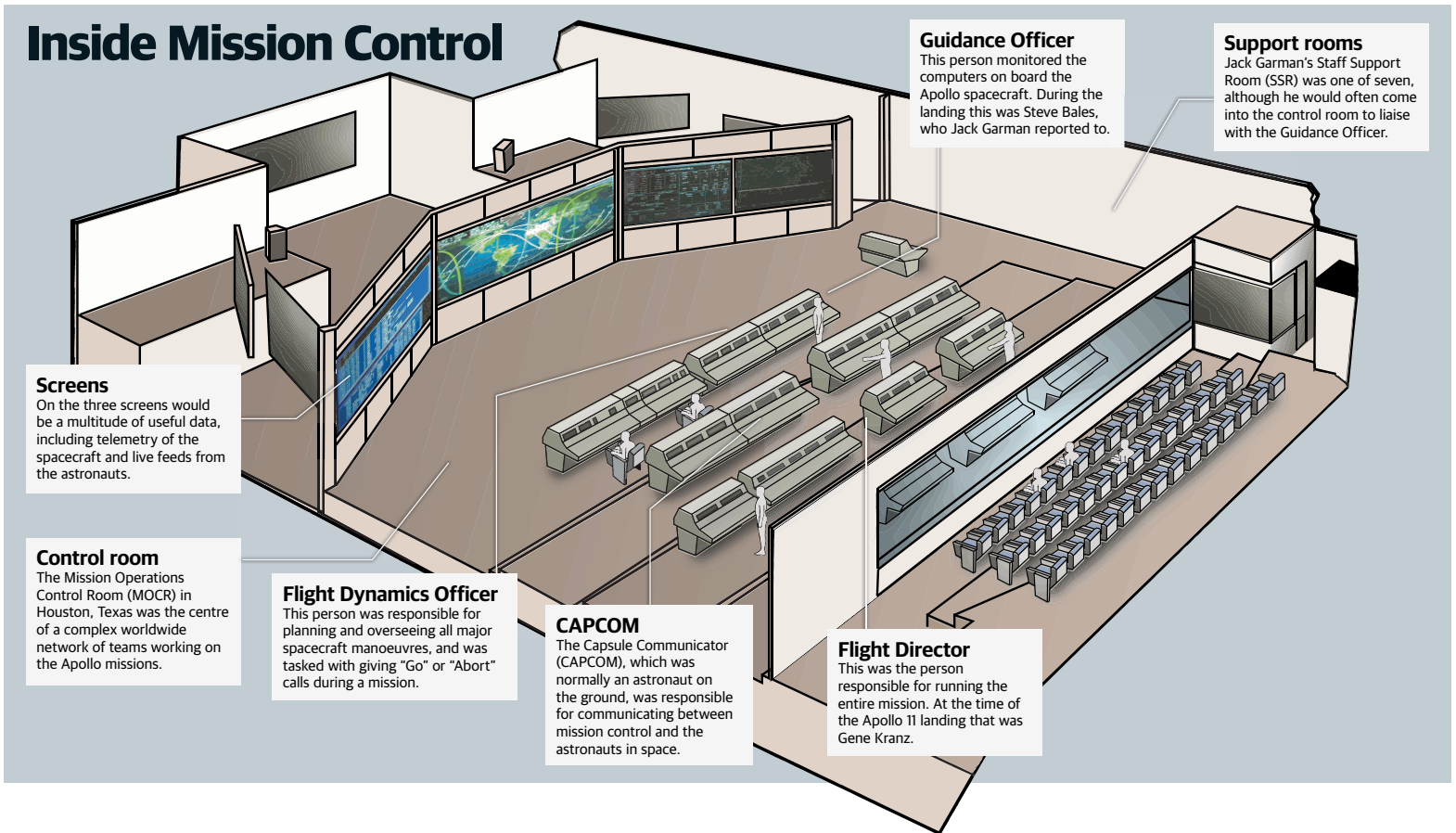
Now, to be clear, the speed of light is pretty fast, but it's still a couple of seconds when you're going from the Moon to Earth, and that's the same rate at which voice or radio transmission goes. So when the alarm happened we didn't hear Buzz Aldrin asking what it was for several seconds. And then take a few seconds to give a response and give it back to them, then for the CAPCOM [Capsule Communicator] to call up and say they were go, then add the reaction time for human beings, it was probably [in total] 19 or 20 seconds for the crew before they got a response from us, very nerve-racking. We know it's one of the reasons Armstrong lost track of where he was [above the Moon] because he wasn't looking out of the window. They didn't know where they had landed for quite a while after they touched down, probably in a large part due to the disturbing nature of these programme alarms."

Just a few seconds later, though, Apollo 11 did indeed



NASA and Manned Spacecraft Center (MSC) officials celebrate the historic event of man successfully walking on the Moon

Inside Mission Control



"As long as there weren't other indications like that the computer was guiding the vehicle to turn upside down or something, we were go"

land safely. As Aldrin and Armstrong celebrated, so too did everyone back in Mission Control on Earth. "I remember Kranz had to calm everybody down, get back to your seats, it's time to go through the landing checklist, and get everything safe and get them ready to get out and all that jazz," says Garman. "It was a very, very euphoric kind of atmosphere; by jove, we actually did it, they actually landed on the Moon."

Garman describes the mood in Mission Control at the time of the landing as eerie. "What I mean is it's like being an actor in a play," he explains. "You go through a lot of rehearsals and dress rehearsals, and then there's actually opening night. When that curtain goes up there's a real audience out there and it's a different feeling. It's eerier. And that's as close as I can get to describing what I mean by eerie. When you have been through the procedures and lots of simulated problems, and you've been through vehicle tests where you're watching the real vehicle on the launchpad and then you actually do it for the first time, and they actually land, you go wow, this is something. That's what I mean by eerie. Not eerie in a sense of unreal, but eerie in the feeling it gave. It was very real, for sure."

It was an incredibly proud achievement for Garman and his colleagues: "I think that any time you can be in a job where you feel like you're higher up on the triangle - and I don't mean that in a superior way - but

you're not in a factory building stuff or supplying food, you're not even in education providing teaching, but you may actually be helping to further the knowledge of the human race in some way, you can feel good about that. I certainly did. We certainly did. And to be in that kind of a job and to have the excitement and risk and adventure that goes with it, it's a very self-fulfilling feeling. It was pretty easy to be dedicated and tenacious, spend way too much time at work, that kind of thing. I was very proud to have been part of that, and I was proud to have been part of the on-board computer for the Space Shuttle as well, and for everything else I did for NASA."

For Garman, Apollo 11 was an experience of a lifetime that will remain one of mankind's greatest achievements in the history books. "I doubt that sort of accomplishment will be repeated, at least not in my lifetime. I think apart from putting a human being on Mars or something like that, that's a ways away. Even going back to the Moon or going to an asteroid, even if that happens, it won't be quite the same as the first time. It never is."

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Origins and aftermath

The Apollo 11 lunar landing was the culmination of the space race between the USA and the Soviet Union that had begun with the Soviets launching the world's first satellite, Sputnik 1, on 4 October 1957. For much of the Sixties it had seemed the Soviets were ahead due to the many 'firsts' they achieved, including the first human in space in 1961. But ultimately, the Soviets' failure to build a capable manned lunar rocket saw USA claim victory. Five more lunar landings would take place before the Apollo programme was finished, but ultimately this competition would pave the way to cooperation in space exploration between the USA, USSR (now Russia) and other countries that we are still seeing the benefits of today, with programmes such as the International Space Station.



© NASA, Peters & Zebrensky



The fall of Saigon

VIETNAM, 30 APRIL 1975

Written by Ben Biggs

DIRCK HALSTEAD



Over the last 50 years, award-winning photojournalist Dirck Halstead has worked for UPI and *Time* documenting several wars, witnessing the attempted assassination of two US presidents and accompanying Richard Nixon on his tour of China. One of the biggest moments of his career, though, was being in Saigon in the spring of 1975, when North Vietnam invaded.

“The invasion had begun in earnest, with gunships streaking across rooftops, gunfire and explosions on the streets”

Back in March 1975, photographer Dirck Halstead was taking snapshots of the rich and famous, staying in plush hotels and living a “photographer’s dream assignment” – but he wasn’t happy. The war in Vietnam had passed a pivotal point and now the scales had swung firmly in favour of the communist North Vietnamese army and the Viet Cong.

As they made their relentless march towards Saigon, the Americans made plans to pull out. By 21 April, nine days before the final evacuation, Dirck found himself back in the country that had nearly killed him several years before, with what some from the outside looking in might find an unusual perspective...

“I have had a love-hate relationship with Vietnam for many, many years and this is not uncommon. I think if you ask most journalists that worked there they would say the same thing. Covering wars is about the most fun we get to do, because even though they can be terrifying, the emotional highs that come with it are equally extreme. I’m not sure that you would find as many fans of covering wars these days as you did then, because now wars are not fought in fun places generally.

“Vietnam was the exception to that. Vietnam was a fun place to be. The food was absolutely wonderful, it was sophisticated. Cocktail hour sitting on top of the Continental Palace or the roof of the Caravelle [both hotels] was wonderful. So there were a lot of creature comforts in Vietnam that other wars did not have. I think that for me it was a formative experience journalistically, as wars are for many journalists.”

Saigon had been distanced from the front lines for two decades and, with US Ambassador Graham Martin planning to evacuate Americans and refugees under the radar, life went on with relative normality. “As most books will acknowledge, until the last week of the war, Saigon was remarkably unchanged. The bars were still open, the great restaurants were still [serving]... The war still had not come to Saigon and life went on very much as it had for most of the last 20 years. But all you had to do was look at the map. The tide was inexorable.”

Nine days before the final evacuation, Dirck boarded a helicopter to a point on the Saigon-Bien Hoa Highway where he would see some ‘bang-bang’. A single ARVN battalion was holding back the entire North Vietnamese army at a village called Xuan Loc. “I would say that in that month leading up to the collapse you had plenty of chances for excitement – if you want to put it that way. There were opportunities to get onto helicopters, go into places like Xuan Loc. Everybody wanted to do that – in fact, I nearly came to blows with a *Time* magazine correspondent over getting on a helicopter to Xuan Loc.”

At the village, Dirck had a close call. Xuan Loc had been torn apart and was eerily quiet, with just a few friendlies cowering in their nearby foxholes. But as their military escort, led by General Le Minh Dao, moved down the road looking for survivors, gunfire split the air around them and the village erupted. Their escort fled into the only Chinook helicopter available, leaving Dirck and a number of press wondering if that was going to be the end of the war for them, until the chopper returned

"They hung around the embassy in throngs, trying to squeeze onto the two black buses or over the walls"

Origins and aftermath

During the Sixties, the US began to upscale its involvement in Vietnam as the Cold War became more intense and America sought to hold back a 'tide of communism'. American troops were deployed en masse in the early-Sixties, combat units in 1965, with activity peaking in 1968. In an effort to eradicate the guerrilla forces of the Viet Cong, Laos and Cambodia were bombed by the US Air Force. By 1973 though, America ended its military involvement and began to pull out. Following the fall of Saigon, North and South Vietnam were merged into the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and over 1 million people were sent to 're-education' (hard-labour) camps.



A US Air Force F-4D conducts a LORAN-assisted bombing in Cambodia

an hour later to take them away from danger, just as the North Vietnamese armoured division was bearing down on them. As strange as it might seem, even at this point Dirck was more embroiled in the unfolding story than in fear for his life: "I had great confidence in the capabilities of the military to get us out of there when the time came. All of us were privy to the planning, so we knew that at a certain time we had to assemble at a given point, get picked up by a bus or put on a helicopter. There was no anxiety on that score."

"We were all busy and every day the noose tightened on Saigon. So if you wanted to go see some bang-bang, you just had to go a little way up the highway. The great thing was that even during the last week when, literally, the fighting was on the bridges coming into Saigon, we still met for cocktail hour in the Continental Palace terrace. It was very strange."

The climax in the days leading up to Saigon's final hour was intense. By 27 April, the weight of the 100,000-strong communist PAVN (People's Army of Vietnam) was at Saigon's outskirts. In the city itself, the fear was that the massacre that had occurred in the city of Hue, perpetrated by PAVN as the front line retreated in 1968, would happen again as the Americans withdrew.

Flights full of refugees fleeing to American soil - both legal and illegal - poured out of Tan Son Nhut Air Base, owners of some of the city's most opulent houses traded

in their properties for a pittance, while the cost of an American visa rocketed. While on the streets, a less salubrious scene was playing out: American workers swept down upon young Vietnamese women desperate to get out by the dozen and the US embassy simply allowed them to sign affidavits vouching for their support for these women - effectively, in Dirck's words, "subsidising a whole flock of instant pimps."

He continued: "Civilians did everything they could to get out of there somehow, calling on any help that they could find - especially among the Americans - to escape. Their situation was desperate, but, of course, we're professional journalists so we don't get desperate - we just get more into the story."

The same day an explosion tore apart the presidential suite in the Majestic Hotel, marking the end of a 40-month period without incident in Saigon. Meanwhile, in the North Vietnamese compound in Tan Son Nhut Air Base, the weekly press conference still went ahead. The representatives from Hanoi and its chief spokesman, Colonel Ba, were answering questions from the gaggle of press gathered there. Anticipation was ripe and one of the questions repeatedly put to the colonel was who would be safe if they stayed in the city once it was taken, to which Colonel Ba's ambiguous answer was, "Anyone who earns an honest living will be welcome."

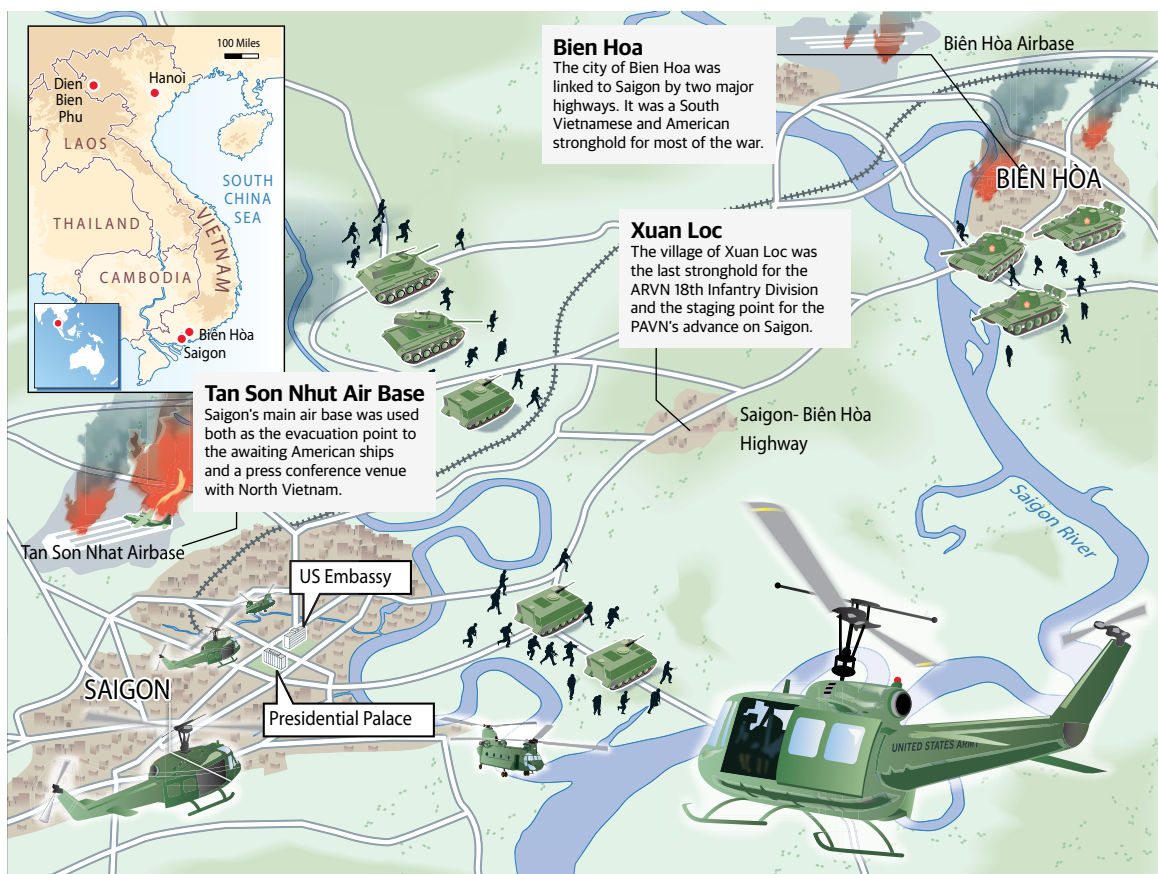
Despite the ominous-sounding words of the North Vietnamese colonel, Dirck remained unperturbed. "The only personal decision that I felt was incumbent on me to make was the basic one: do I stay or do I go? There were strong reasons for both options. In my case, because I was a contract photographer, I did not necessarily have to go along with any decision that

Time magazine made, though it was strongly recommended I did. All the staff people, with the exception of the Associated Press - I think [there had been] an order from their New York offices - had to leave and expedite the evacuation of all Vietnamese nationals working for them."

The next day, the invasion had begun in earnest, with gunships streaking across the rooftops, gunfire and explosions on the streets. Though most of the Western press bureaus had cleared their people, there still remained a thinning contingent of 'die-hard Westerners' - predominantly journalists and government officials, clinging on until the very last chopper out of there.

Dirck himself was approached by a Vietnamese colleague - his darkroom man - trying to get his family out. He told him to fetch his family and meet him back there, but the word to evacuate came over the radio as soon as he had gone - "The temperature is 105 and rising" - leaving Dirck with little choice but to rush for the buses to the air base without his workmate.

Here, the sheer plight of those unable to escape became most



apparent. They hung around the embassy in throngs, trying to squeeze onto the two black buses or over the walls to the embassy compound while US Marines pushed them back.

When they couldn't get on the buses, they surged in front, forming a line that blocked its path. With a Marine barking in his face, telling him to "Move it!" while pressing a handgun into his neck, the driver had no choice but to drive the bus straight into the mayhem, inevitably crushing several unfortunate people before it had cleared the crowd.

Well aware of the final stages of the American withdrawal, the PAVN was focusing its attention on securing the city and clearing the last of the South Vietnamese resistance. Nevertheless it wasn't about to let the Americans go without a little encouragement. Tan

Son Nhut Air Base had already come under attack and, while the helicopters landed to pick up the remaining press workers and civilians, the Marines guarding the compound were under a rain of mortar fire. The Swift 22 chopper finally came for Dirck, taking him out of Saigon to the safety of a nearby US command ship.

"The evacuation for me involved three different ships. The first helicopter that took me out landed me on the USS Blue Ridge, which was the command ship. That's where a lot of the high-profile people like [Ambassador] Graham Martin were - they all landed on the Blue Ridge. But the problem with that was that it had no fixed-wing capability, so now my whole race was to get this film that was sitting in the middle of the South China Sea to the Philippines and then to New York. That was a real challenge and we had to petition the skipper of the Blue Ridge to get us off there, so that we could get to a carrier.

"I had been forbidden to leave the Blue Ridge, so when a helicopter came in from the Coral Sea to deposit some officers, I made a break for it. They were shouting, "Stop that man!", I jumped on the helicopter and yelled at the pilot to get me off there.

"[Saigon] is right up there [as a defining moment in my career]. The Nixon trip to China was the biggest story because there was so much competition to get on it and I was fortunate enough to be selected as one of six photographers to go on that trip. Everything was brand new and so historic... But looking back, I feel I was very blessed to have been able to go down this path and be there as history was being made in Vietnam."

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Under a barrage of explosions, the Marines loaded American and Vietnamese civilians, who feared for their lives, on to helicopters that brought them to waiting aircraft carriers



Dirck Halstead on an evacuation ship in the South China Sea as Saigon falls to North Vietnamese troops in April 1975

The day Saigon was invaded...

- 03.45am ● **Frequent Wind ends**
The refugee evacuation - Operation Frequent Wind - which had started the day before on 29 April is halted
- 03.50am ● **The American ambassador Graham Martin is ordered to evacuate**
- 04.00am ● **PAVN 324th Division starts to enter Saigon** 
- 04.30am ● **No more Vietnamese evacuees allowed**
- 05.00am ● **Martin escapes**
Ambassador Martin leaves the US embassy for a US Navy ship in the South China Sea
- 06.00am ● **PAVN moves into Saigon en masse**
- 07.00am ● **Final civilians and officials leave via the Tan Son Nhut Air Base** 
- 07.53am ● **The majority of Embassy Marines evacuate via helicopter just before 8am**
- 10.24am ● **South surrenders**
President Minh announces South Vietnam's surrender over the radio, calling for an end to 'unnecessary bloodshed'
- 11.30am ● **Ambassador Martin lands safely on the USS Blue Ridge**
- 12.00pm ● **Independence Palace falls, as tanks crash through the palace's gates**
- 12.15pm ● **New flag**
North Vietnam raises its colours - the flag of the Viet Cong - over the palace 
- 13.30pm ● **Final five Marines are rescued from the city**
- 16.00pm ● **All American ships leave for home**

Almost a week after the initial eruption the volcano was still pouring out tons of lava and ash



Iceland eruption

ICELAND, 23 JANUARY 1973

Written by Erlingur Einarsson

ÓLAFUR GRÄNZ



Ólafur Gränz is a former carpenter and book publisher from Iceland. He lived for 50 years on the island of Heimaey, running a carpentry shop, car rental and a tourist boat excursion business. He later became an international book publisher, but is retired today.

“Almost instantly, a wall of fire spewed out of the ground and we were hit by immense heat”

Vestmannaeyjar (Westman Islands in English) are a group of small islands south of Iceland. Shortly after Iceland's settlement, the biggest of those, Heimaey, became home to fishermen and their families, ultimately growing to a village of more than 5,000 people. The islands were formed by a series of volcanic eruptions several millennia ago but, apart from the formation of new island Surtsey in 1963, the inhabitants had never been seriously bothered by Iceland's prolific - and infamous - volcanic activity. On 23 January 1973, that would change spectacularly.

Ólafur Gränz had lived in Vestmannaeyjar (the town is named after the islands themselves) for his whole life and would be the first witness to the closest encounters a European town would have with an volcano in the 20th Century. "On the morning of 21 January 1973 I took a walk over to the eastern part of the island," he recalls. After arriving at Urdarviti, one of the island's lighthouses, he decided to hike across Helgafell, a long-dormant volcano posing as a hill overlooking the village. It had last erupted 5,000 years ago: "When I arrived at Helgafell's slopes I noticed that the earth had sunken across an area I knew very well. There was a beetroot garden there, which my mates and I had sometimes grabbed a few beetroots from when I passed through - with the owners' permission, of course. The ground had sunken by about 80 centimetres (30 inches) and I wondered why I hadn't noticed this on our many travels through the area before." Having hiked higher into Helgafell's slopes he looked back: "The sunken ground looked like a dried-up riverbed in the shape of an 'S'."

As it turns out, this would be the exact spot an eruption would crack and shatter the ground less than 40 hours later. And he would be right there to watch it happen. He remembers that, "Just after midnight on

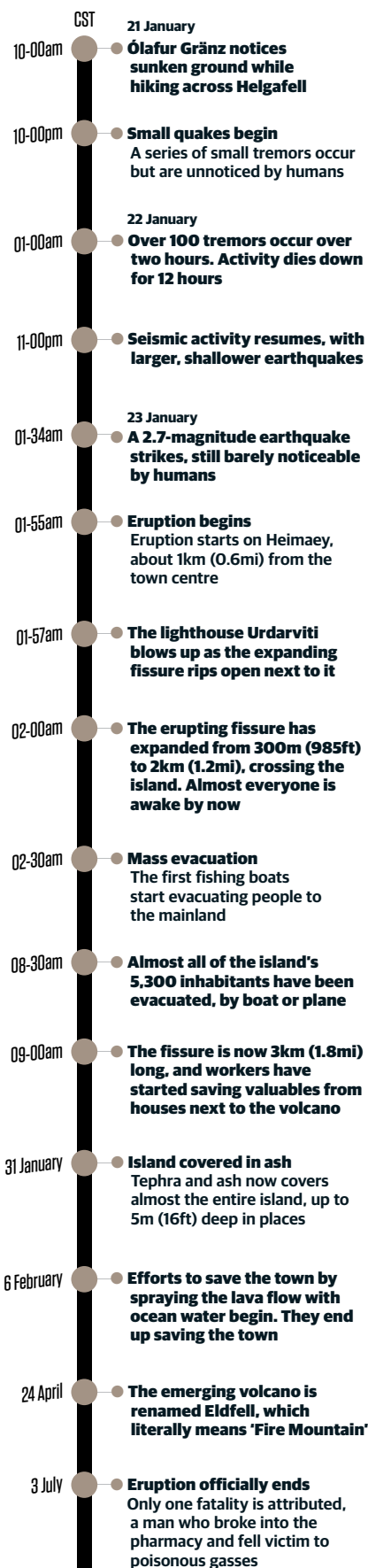
the eve of 23 January, my childhood friend, Hjalmar Guðnason, phoned me and asked if I wanted to go for a pier walk, as we often did, partly on account of sharing ownership of a small fishing boat at the time. He worked at Vestmannaeyjaradio [the island's radio messaging station] at the time and his shift had ended at midnight. I was tucked into bed by then but was ultimately persuaded to go out."

They took a walk down to the harbour and the marina, where they chanced upon their colleague, another fisherman: "After a short 'shop talk' with him, we decided to head out for Urdarviti, despite it being pitch black."

For a couple of days leading up to 23 January, seismic monitoring stations had been picking up increased seismic activity around Heimaey, but they were too weak to be felt by the residents, except the largest ones which measured up to 2.7 magnitude on the Richter scale. However, as earthquakes are a frequent occurrence in Iceland the local population ignored them. The only ones paying them any attention were those monitoring the seismic readings and they found that the readings were focused around Heimaey and becoming progressively shallower and more concentrated with each tremor.

The two friends had just passed the old church house on the outskirts of town, when the island decided to wake up from its 5,000-year slumber in impressive fashion. "We were startled by very loud rumbling about 100-200 meters (330-660 feet) from us," Ólafur says. "Almost instantly, a wall of fire spewed out of the ground and we were hit by immense heat. A nearby herd of horses was filled with panic and they ran away into all directions. For a while we just stood there taking in this terrifying spectacle which was growing by the second. The fissure kept on ripping open and expanding toward

A natural disaster



The eruption formed a new mountain at the edge of town, covering hundreds of houses

"I was unable to breathe... I lost consciousness at the same time and was dragged out by my colleagues, unconscious"

the sea, and a minute later we looked on as Urdarviti, which was filled with gas canisters, blew up."

Their short chat had delayed their journey to the lighthouse by only a few minutes, but it was enough to save their lives. "That's probably the reason I'm still here today, talking about this," admits Ólafur. He was 32 years old at the time, the father of seven children and ran his own carpentry business, which was housed by Heimatorg square at Jónsborg in the eastern part of town. Awe would soon be replaced by urgency: "After we had watched the magnificent spectacle for a while we headed home to wake up our families. We had just arrived home when we got a message that the authorities had declared an immediate evacuation from the island. Before we left, though, I ran over to the next house to wake up and alert the people there. I started by knocking on the basement window, where my friend was renting. I banged on the window and said: 'Boggi, wake up! There's an eruption on the island!' He came to the window, half-asleep and replied: 'Shut up! You don't need to bother me just because you can't sleep'. We met up just a short while ago and had a good laugh reminiscing about that."

As weather had been bad for the days leading up to the eruption, most of the town's fishing boats were tied up at the harbour, so they were all used to ferry families

across to the mainland. Ólafur would have to take care of both his own family as well as Hjálmar's: "We prepared for the evacuation in a hurry, but Hjálmar was summoned to the messaging station for an emergency shift." Ólafur escorted their families through choppy waters to the small mainland village of Thorlákshófn and from there to the capital, Reykjavík.

He did not stay there for long though and he recalls that, "Once I had found a safe place for our families I took the first plane back to the island to help people save valuables and board up windows facing the eruption, which had multiplied in size in only a few hours."

The eruption uprooted over 5,000 people from their homes, a massive number for a nation of only 210,000 at the time. It sparked the formation of an official disaster relief fund, which would provide ongoing aid and financial support for victims of the eruption as well as other future disasters from then on. Ólafur's whole world had been turned upside down, but he didn't just sit back and wait for the eruption to die out. He, along with other locals and the national authorities, would take part in staunchly fighting it.

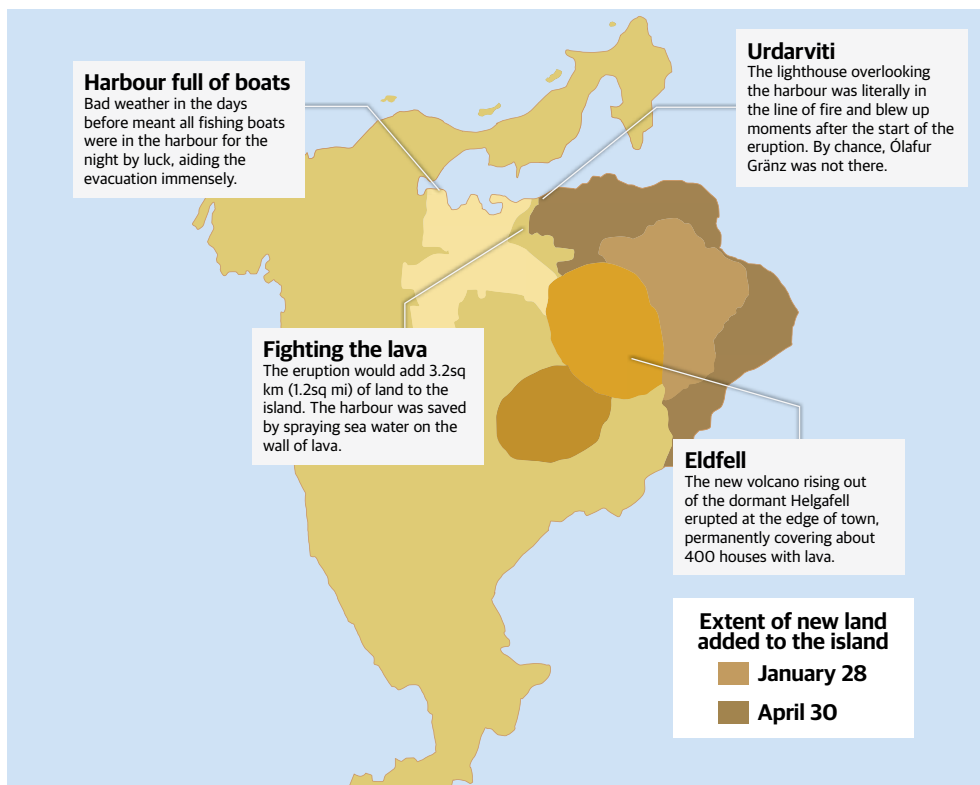
"My longest stint was as foreman for a group of emergency workers, whose assignment was to board up windows on the walls and roofs facing the eruption, as Tephra rained over the town for a long time. More than

once we would save valuables from a house close to the constantly growing volcano, take a coffee break and when we returned the house would be gone." His initial brush with death at the start of the eruption wouldn't be the last, either. "One time, I dove through a living room window into a house about to be buried under the lava, with the intention of saving doors and furniture, but it was filled with toxic gasses. I was unable to breathe, but with a lot of effort I managed to open the front door. I lost consciousness at the same time and was dragged out by my colleagues, unconscious."

Ólafur would face more long-lasting consequences of the eruption than dizziness. "My car was shipped to Reykjavík, where it was summarily stolen and remains lost to this day. My shop burned down and was completely covered in ash and my house is still buried under 20 meters (66 feet) of lava. Our boat sank at the harbour and spent a considerable time at the bottom of the sea, and the family's entire belongings were lost for a long while, only to be found three months later in poor condition in an airplane hangar. Nothing was left."

His family got enough money from the disaster relief fund for a down-payment on a new flat in the salvaged bit of Heimaey. It was filled with ash, most of the windows were broken and the water pipes had been destroyed by frost damage. Still, they moved in that same year, in June 1973, and thousands of people would follow them back. Today, over 4,100 people live in Vestmannaeyjar: "By the end of the eruption, you had dried your tears, pulled up your sleeves and gone to work rebuilding your life. By spring, I had bought a new carpentry garage, fixed it up in my spare time and got the business running again."

There was plenty, after all, for a carpenter to do. "When I moved from the island after over 50 years there, I had made a fair amount of money; between the end of the eruption and moving to Reykjavík I had bought, fixed up and re-sold about 25 apartments and houses. I had a



large and loyal group of customers. After moving to the mainland I started publishing books internationally and did that for over a decade. Looking back, I'm thankful for the opportunities the eruption ultimately provided."

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Origins and aftermath

The origins lie deep beneath Earth's surface, in the gradual build-up of magma underneath the island. With the expanding population in Iceland, one of the most active volcanic hot spots on Earth, it was only a matter of time before an eruption would take place in a densely inhabited area, but the Heimaey eruption was the first and only within town limits to date. The eruption was reported on extensively by world media, even rivalling coverage of the ongoing Vietnam War at the time. The island became a tourist attraction even before the eruption was over, and the efforts to save the town and its harbour by fighting the advancing lava with seawater gained international attention. As is so often the case, the natural disaster brought out a community's solidarity and resolve and today the island's population is almost the same as in 1973.



© Corbis/Getty



JFK Assassination

DALLAS, USA 22 NOVEMBER 1963

Written by Jodie Tyley

HUGH AYNESWORTH



He's been dubbed 'the man who saw too much', having witnessed the assassination of John F Kennedy and the shooting of the killer Lee Harvey Oswald by Jack Ruby. Hugh Aynesworth was the Aerospace Editor for *The Dallas Morning News* but fast became an acclaimed investigative journalist, nominated for the Pulitzer Prize for Reporting six times.

“ I heard what I thought was a motorcycle backfire. Then I heard the second shot and immediately I realised it was a rifle ”

Hugh Aynesworth was standing across the street from the sniper nest, on the day the United States' President John F Kennedy was shot. It wasn't seen as the prime spot for watching the President's parade through Dallas, but it turned out to be the most eventful stretch of the entire motorcade as the limousine made the sharp left turn onto Elm Street and mere moments later, the fatal shots were fired.

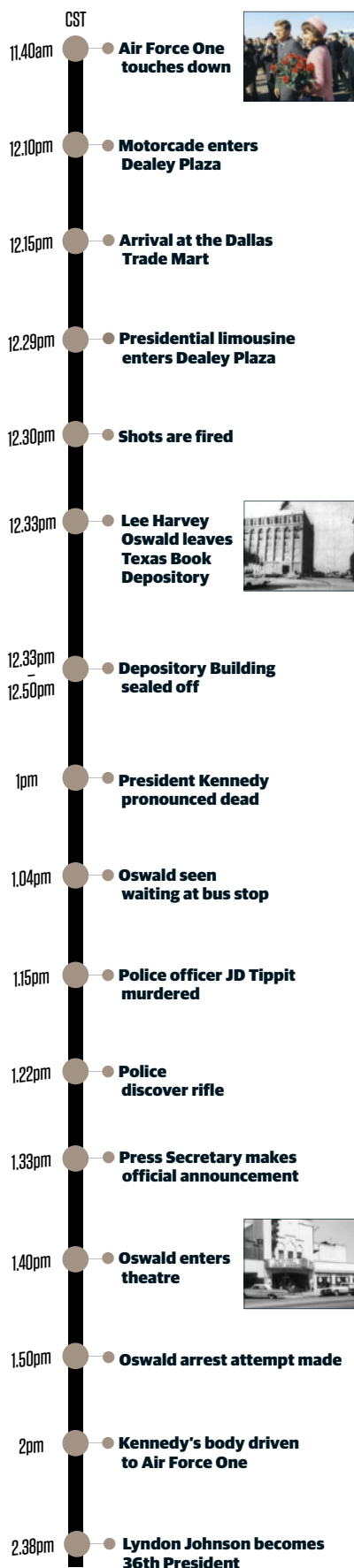
32-year-old Aynesworth was there by chance. "I went to the motorcade because almost everyone else in *The Dallas Morning News* newsroom did the same," he recalls. "Most of them had assignments but I had freedom until 3pm so I thought I'd walk over the four blocks. You don't see a President every day!" Aynesworth's usual beat was space exploration and he was Aviation and Aerospace Editor during the Space Race between the US and the Soviet Union. But there was no escaping the buzz around the President's impending visit, especially after speaking with a group of "arch Conservatives" the day before. "The people that hated Kennedy were going to show up with picket signs and dress in Uncle Sam suits and just show him that they didn't like him and they didn't like his policies," he says. "They wanted publicity and, the day before, the editor sent me to interview a couple of them and they told me they were going to embarrass him in some way at the Trade Mart. Although we expected some picketing and angry shouting perhaps, nobody expected any real trouble."

There was a good turnout along Main Street so in a bid to bag a better view, Aynesworth went to the corner

of Elm Street in front of the County Records Building. "The mood of the crowd was jubilant, happy, pleased and impressed with the young President and his beautiful lady," he says. "Everyone was relieved because we'd had that horrible hate JFK ad in the *Dallas News* and people were expecting there to be an embarrassment of sorts. So by the time Kennedy arrived in mid-town, there were cheers of relief." Aynesworth saw the presidential limo take the left at the corner where he stood and remembers the smiling faces of John F Kennedy, his wife Jacqueline, and the Governor of Texas John Connally as they waved to the crowd. "They were very happy, they would have known the reputation of some of these trouble makers," he says. "It was just a happy, happy occasion. Within seconds, it changed."

A shot fired and the President seized his throat, another two shots and his head exploded. "Seconds after the Kennedy car passed, I heard what I thought was a motorcycle backfire," he says. "Seconds later I heard the second shot and immediately I realised it was a rifle shot. Then a third ensued rapidly." In the minutes that followed, panic rippled through the crowd. "People close to me reacted with alarm: some shielded their children, a couple screamed, a couple more threw up their lunch. With the unusual layout of Dealey Plaza, nobody immediately knew what had happened or from where the shots came. Or, for that matter, how many people were shooting and if there were more shots to come. One of the first remarks was from a man who said he had seen Vice President Johnson hit. A motorcycle

The day a President died



cop told two women in front of me that the president had been hit. I didn't know what to do, I thought about just running like hell but that layout is so unusual, a couple of buildings on a couple of sides and open space and we didn't know where the shots were coming from." Instead, his journalistic nature prevailed and he began to interview bystanders, writing on envelopes in his pocket.

Even in the heat of the moment stories were contradictory, down to the number of shots fired. "The acoustics were so weird that no one knew what direction the shots were coming from," he reports. "There were all kinds of statements about seeing people in trees or on the grassy knoll. There were people that swore they'd heard 11 or 12 shots and one woman only heard one. I can guarantee you there were three shots. But most people were willing to talk apart from the people who had children and wanted to get the hell out of there." The only real witness according to Aynesworth was a man called Howard Brennan. "He was pointing up to the School Book Depository window, which was the building in front of me, and shouting 'He's up there, I saw him, I saw him.' So I ran over and tried to get him to talk to me but he got two policemen to push me away. Later he told me he was scared for his family because we didn't know if there was more than one person shooting."

Brennan's description of the suspected sniper, later named as Lee Harvey Oswald, was broadcast to law enforcements immediately. It was probably this account that prompted Dallas Police Officer JD Tippit to stop Oswald in the street at 1:15pm, 45 minutes after Kennedy was shot. "After being rebuffed by Brennan, I eased over to a police radio on a cycle," he says, recalling his efforts to learn about what had happened. "Then I heard the report of Officer Tippit being shot and I thought as it was only a few blocks away, it's bound to be connected somehow. I grabbed a television car with two reporters in it, told them what I heard and we sped like mad to the scene. We arrived before most of the cops got there and interviewed everyone we could find. I spoke to six

people who had seen Oswald shoot him, or seen him run from the scene, or seen him plant or throw away shells. There were many eyewitnesses to the Tippit killing." Incidentally, this murder was the reason for Oswald's initial arrest, not Kennedy's.

A man-hunt ensued and a false alarm at a decrepit furniture store led to an officer falling through the ground with a bang. As the cops drew their pistols, Aynesworth became aware that he was the only man unarmed. "I thought, 'Boy, I gotta get out of here,'" he laughs. "Then we heard on the radio there was a suspect in the Texas Theatre," he tells us, "so I ran like hell for eight blocks." After speaking to the ticket seller Julia Postal, who couldn't recall whether the murderer had bought a ticket or not, he inched closer to the front of the theatre. "I peeked through the curtain and saw two men - one in uniform and the other in civilian clothing - coming up the aisles and talking to people who were there," he says, as he watched from a few feet away. "There were only 12 or 13 people in that lower part of the theatre and I saw who I later realised was Oswald shifting one seat over to the right and Officer McDonald told him to stand up. Oswald pulled a pistol out of his pocket and tried to shoot him, but somebody got their hand on the weapon, jammed the firing mechanism and saved him." The police captured him as he yelled, 'I protest this police brutality!'

It was at the theatre that Aynesworth discovered the President had died over a transistor radio. By that point, everyone was listening to the rolling news bulletins and this one stunned its audience. "I was shocked and hurt," he recalls. "It was an unbelievable day." Outside the theatre, a throng had gathered and were calling for the murderer's head. "They were an unruly, mad crowd of about two or three hundred people. They were yelling 'Kill that son of a bitch' and 'Get that communist!' There were people that would have tried to take him, and the police moved pretty fast and got him into a car outside the front door and held the crowd back." It quickly

"I grabbed a television car with two reporters in it, told them what I heard and we sped like mad to the scene"



Hugh (right) interviewing a cab driver who unknowingly picked up Lee Harvey Oswald after the shooting



After he is sworn into office Lyndon B Johnson, together with Lady Bird and Judge Sarah T Hughes, comforts Jackie Kennedy



Aynesworth worked on the *Dallas Morning News* at the time of the assassination

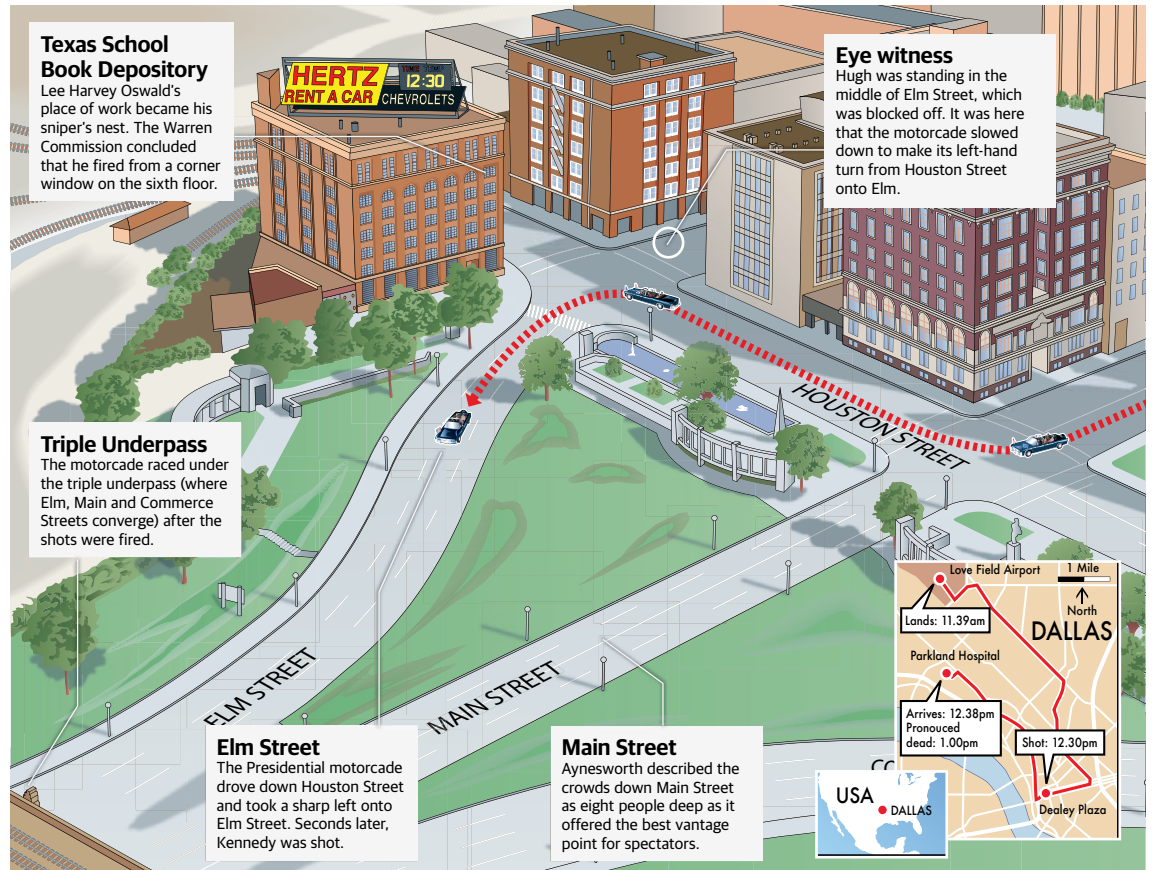
became public knowledge that the prime suspect, a former US Marine, had defected to the Soviet Union four years previously and returned with a Russian wife.

It was during the Cold War and tense relations between the US and the Soviet Union shaped the lives of Kennedy and Oswald, as well as the public's reaction to the assassination, fuelling speculation and conspiracy stories. For Aynesworth, there's no doubt who the killer was. "My thoughts on the Warren Commission? Essentially they got it right, but the investigation was too hurried and left many holes that they could have filled. There was considerable evidence against Oswald and absolutely no evidence of anyone assisting him. As a 65-year veteran of many murder trials, there was more evidence against Oswald than 90 per cent of those convicted in the trials I covered."

After the Kennedy shooting, Aynesworth worked solely on the assassination, which led him to break several stories. The first was how the killer fled the scene and arrived at his rooming house before travelling to his next murder, Officer Tippit, to the theatre where he was caught. Through investigative journalism, Aynesworth and reporter Larry Grove from *The Morning News* pieced together the route in the face of witnesses told to keep quiet by the FBI. Once they figured Oswald took a taxi after getting off the bus at Elm Street, they began



Hugh Aynesworth with Marina Oswald and her daughter, June



Texas School Book Depository
Lee Harvey Oswald's place of work became his sniper's nest. The Warren Commission concluded that he fired from a corner window on the sixth floor.

Eye witness
Hugh was standing in the middle of Elm Street, which was blocked off. It was here that the motorcade slowed down to make its left-hand turn from Houston Street onto Elm.

Triple Underpass
The motorcade raced under the triple underpass (where Elm, Main and Commerce Streets converge) after the shots were fired.

Elm Street
The Presidential motorcade drove down Houston Street and took a sharp left onto Elm Street. Seconds later, Kennedy was shot.

Main Street
Aynesworth described the crowds down Main Street as eight people deep as it offered the best vantage point for spectators.

catching taxis themselves. On every journey they'd replay the same conversation about 'what's-his-name, the guy who gave a ride to the man who shot the President', until the line finally snagged and one driver chirped up, 'You mean Louie?' A chat with Louie and the escape route was mapped out.

Aynesworth later bagged the first print interview with Marina Oswald and with it the scoop that she had persuaded her late husband not to assassinate Richard Nixon, a threat the widow hadn't even shared with the Warren Commission. But the biggest revelation was uncovering Oswald's Russian diary, which *The Dallas Morning News* ran with the splash 'Secret Diary - Oswald's Thoughts Bared.' And though Aynesworth can credit the breaking of these stories to his journalism, he knows it was just chance that placed him there that day of Kennedy's assassination. "It was just pure dumb luck," he resigns. "I wasn't assigned to any of it. I just made a good judgement when I thought someone shot the cop and I thought they were connected."



Hugh Aynesworth's *November 22, 1963 Witness To History* is released on 3 September, published by Brown Books Publishing Group. Available to pre-order via www.hughaynesworth.com.

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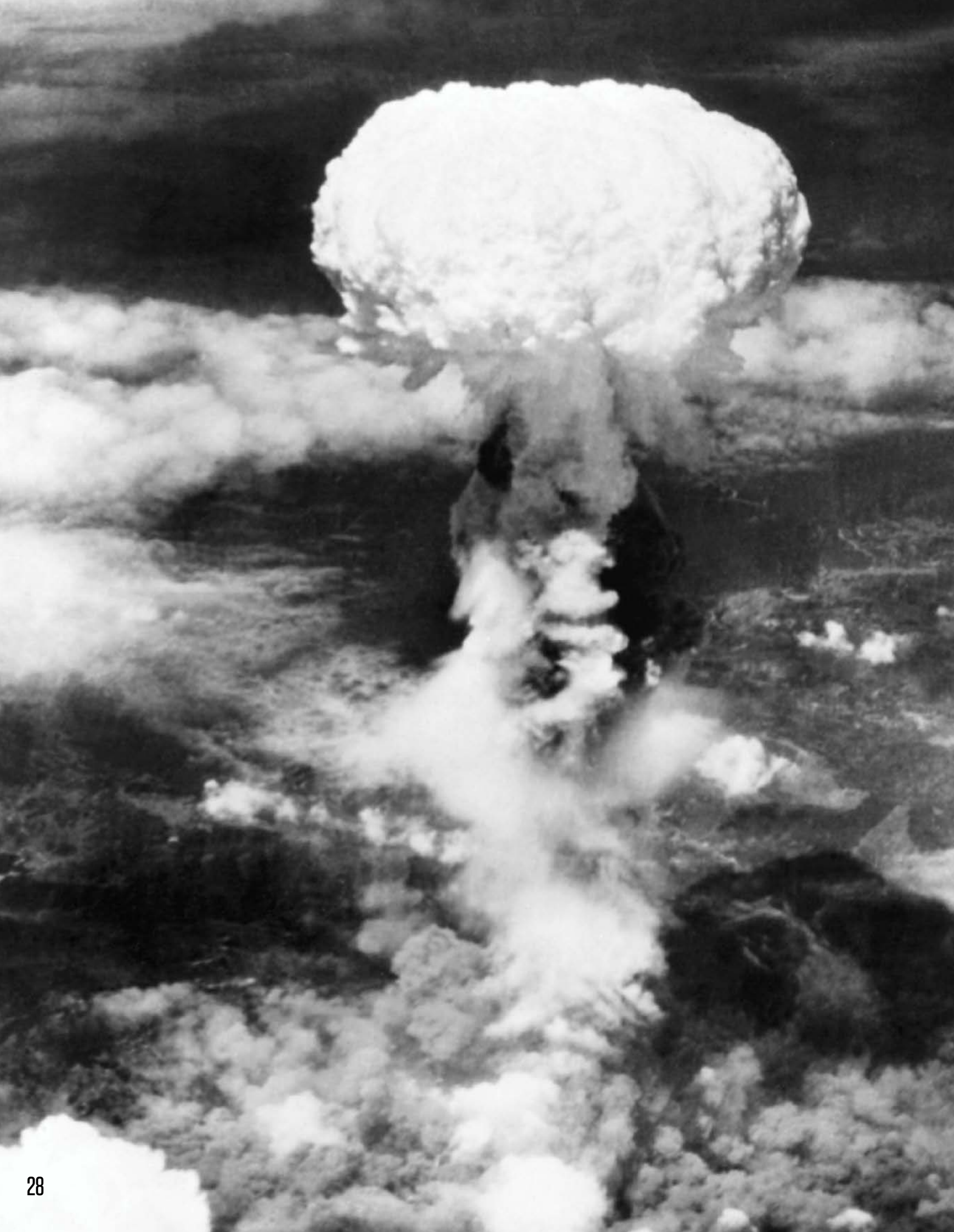
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Origins and aftermath

With the US election looming the following year, President Kennedy made plans to visit Texas. He had just scraped a marginal win in 1960 and even lost in Dallas, so the quest for re-election began. Meanwhile, a month before the motorcade, Oswald started working at the Texas School Book Depository. This is where he would wait with a rifle, perched at a sixth-floor window, on the day of the Presidential motorcade. Kennedy was fatally shot, sparking a ten-month investigation by the Warren Commission. It named Lee Harvey Oswald as Kennedy's killer, but conspiracy theories dogged his death. Some speculate there were two snipers; others finger the CIA or the Cuban government. How could a US president be assassinated in the 20th century, and why?



The Warren Commission present its report to President Lyndon Johnson



Hiroshima

JAPAN, 6 AUGUST 1945

Written by Adam Millward

DUTCH VAN KIRK



Having already served 58 missions in Africa and Europe during World War II, Dutch

Van Kirk transferred to the 509th Composite Group. He was the navigator on the Enola Gay, which on 6 August 1945 dropped the first nuclear bomb on the Japanese city of Hiroshima. Now 92, Dutch is the only surviving crew member of the Enola Gay.

“I didn't feel too good about dropping the bomb - but I didn't feel too bad about dropping it either. It could have been us...”

Theodore Van Kirk, known to everyone as 'Dutch', was having trouble sleeping.

It was a common affliction among soldiers before a mission, but then again Dutch and his fellow 11 crewmates stationed on the tiny Pacific island of Tinian had more reason than most to be suffering from insomnia that night. The date was 5 August 1945 and tomorrow morning they were to drop the first-ever atomic bomb on Hiroshima.

To pass the time, some of the crew - including navigator Dutch, bombardier, Tom Ferebee, and pilot, Paul Tibbets, played poker. It was quite prophetic considering that in a matter of hours they would be gambling again - but this time with much higher stakes.

Sure, the USA had successfully detonated the first nuclear device the previous month during the Trinity test in New Mexico, and Dutch, like all the crew, had several months' intensive training at Wendover Airbase in Utah under his belt. Nevertheless the fact remained that what they were about to do had never before been attempted in warfare. Indeed, Dutch recalls, "One of the atomic scientists told us we think you'll be okay if the plane is [14.5 kilometres] nine miles away when the bomb detonates." When challenged on his use of the word *think*, he levelled with them: "We just don't know."

Dutch had been hand-picked to join the 509th Composite Group - the unit tasked with deploying nuclear weapons - by his former commander: "I flew with Paul Tibbets all the time in England. We flew General Dwight Eisenhower [later to become US

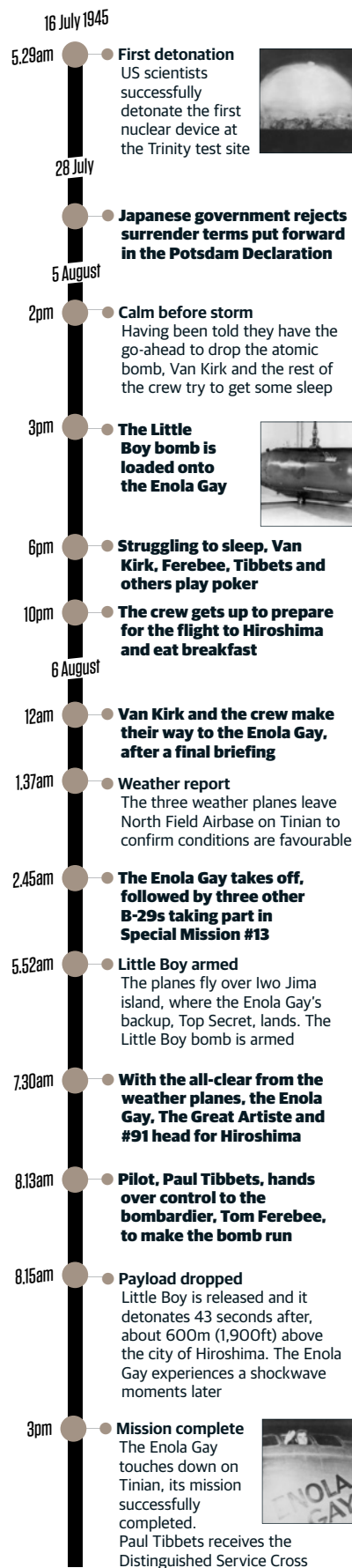
president] from Hurn [on the south coast of Britain] down to Gibraltar, for example, to command the north African invasion. Then we were all separated and doing various things - I was at a navigation school, for example, teaching other navigators. Tibbets was picked to take command of the 509th group and that's when he looked up some of the people he'd worked with in the 97th [Bombardment Group]."

The history books often paint a picture that the US government and other Allied powers were hand-wringing right up until the final hour over the decision to use the A-bomb. However, although Japan was presented with an ultimatum to surrender on 26 July - which they rejected two days later - Dutch personally felt it was always a foregone conclusion: "I knew that I was going to drop the atomic bomb from February of that year [1945]. It didn't come as a surprise. We were posted to the US airbase at Tinian for about a month prior to dropping the bomb, just keeping in shape."

Around 10pm, the crew were called from the barracks to have an early breakfast before one last briefing and final checks of the Enola Gay. Dutch remembers they had pineapple fritters because he hated them, but Paul Tibbets loved them. While he might not have seen eye to eye with his commander when it came to breakfast, he has only praise for the man that piloted the specially modified B-29 to Hiroshima - and back again.

"He was an outstanding pilot. His skill saved all of the crew's lives a number of times in Europe and Africa. When he got in an aeroplane, he [became] part of it.

Countdown to destruction



Seven of the Enola Gay's 12-man bombing crew stand before the aircraft; Dutch is third from the left, looking down, next to pilot, Paul Tibbets



The North Field Airbase on Tinian played host to 15 modified B-29s and their crews

When you flew with Paul Tibbets you didn't have to have your shoes polished or your pants pressed - and all that sort of stuff - but when you got in the plane, you better damn well know what you were doing!"

It's hard to imagine what the mood on the Enola Gay must have been like as it took off at 2.45am, but from Dutch's perspective this mission was the same as any other. "We were going a long distance over water, using Iwo Jima as a checkpoint on the way. Now if you got lost between Iwo Jima and Japan, you really were a sorry navigator! Everybody on board was doing his own thing. Ferebee took a nap, for example, [while] our radio operator, as I recall, was reading a whodunnit about some boxer. Everybody was making sure they did what they were there to do, and that they did it right."

While the Enola Gay and Bockscar (the plane that dropped the Nagasaki A-bomb) are the two that have gone down in history, Dutch is keen to point out that the operation was a lot wider than that: indeed, seven aircraft were involved in Special Bombing Mission #13 to Hiroshima on 6 August. Three were observational planes that flew ahead to ensure conditions were right, Top Secret was a backup to the Enola Gay which landed on Iwo Jima, while the other two aircraft - The Great Artiste and Plane #91 (later named Necessary Evil) - accompanied the Enola Gay for the full operation.

"The Great Artiste had instruments that were to be dropped at the same time as we dropped the bomb. If you were to ask me the name of them, I couldn't tell you; I just always called them 'blast meters' because that's what they were measuring. The other aircraft [Plane #91] was flying about [32 kilometres] 20 miles behind with a large camera to get pictures of the explosion. Unfortunately on the day the camera didn't work. So the best pictures we got were from the handheld camera of the navigator on that plane."

The three aircraft arrived at Hiroshima without incident around 8am. The city had been chalked as the

primary target for several reasons. There were a great number of military facilities and troops there, as well as a busy port with factories supplying a lot of the materials that would be used to defend Japan in the event of an invasion. Beyond these factors, Hiroshima had never been previously targeted by Allied forces, so any damage recorded later could solely be attributed to the nuclear bomb. Tragically for the citizens of Hiroshima, it also meant the Japanese authorities had very little reason to suspect an attack there - even when the tiny squadron of three B-29s was no doubt spotted approaching...

On the actual bomb run, Tibbets relinquished control of the Enola Gay to bombardier and close friend of Dutch's, Major Tom Ferebee. As the Little Boy bomb (which actually was not so little, weighing in at 4,400 kilograms/9,700 pounds) was released, the plane experienced an upward surge, but Tibbets managed to stabilise the B-29 and beat a hasty retreat.

"We made the 150-degree turn that we'd practised many times and pushed down the throttle to get away. All people were doing was holding on to something [in preparation for] the turbulence that was sure to follow. A loose person or a loose anything in the plane was going to go flying, so we all made sure we were in position and wearing our goggles." They were about 14.5 kilometres (nine miles) away when the bomb exploded, 43 seconds after it had been released. "We couldn't hear a thing over the engines, but we saw a bright flash and it was shortly after that we got the first shockwave."

"When we turned to take a look back, all we could see of Hiroshima was black smoke and dust. The mushroom cloud was well above us at about [12,190 metres] 40,000 feet and still rising. You could still see that cloud [480 kilometres] 300 miles away." What the crew of the Enola Gay couldn't have known at that point was just how destructive the atomic bomb had been. Underneath all that smoke and dust nearly 70 per cent of the city's buildings had been laid to waste and 80,000 people

"When we turned to look back, all we could see of Hiroshima was black smoke and dust"



The destruction wreaked on Hiroshima by the A-bomb was on an unprecedented scale

were dead - and that figure was set to rise with the much-underestimated effects of radiation.

Unlike The Great Artiste with its faulty camera, as far as Dutch was concerned on board the Enola Gay "everything had gone exactly according to plan. The weather was perfect; I could probably see Hiroshima from [120 kilometres] 75 miles away. My navigation was only off by six seconds," he says with pride. "Tom put the bomb exactly where he expected. We got a lot of turbulence, but the plane did not break up, which it could have done, and we got home. Now, as for the second mission to Nagasaki, everything went wrong. They had a lot of luck on that mission..."

Indeed, three days later on 9 August, a different bombing crew on Bockscar almost didn't make it to Nagasaki due to a combination of bad weather and logistical errors. However, they managed to salvage the mission; the result of their success, or 'luck' as Dutch describes it, was the instant obliteration of another city and at least 40,000 of its inhabitants. Less than a week later Emperor Hirohito made a radio announcement to his subjects, declaring Japan's surrender due to "a new and most cruel bomb, the power of which is incalculable, taking the toll of many innocent lives."

A few weeks after the bombings, Dutch Van Kirk was part of the crew transporting scientists to Nagasaki to measure the devastation of one of these 'new and most cruel bombs' first-hand. "Having picked up some scientists in Tokyo from the Japanese atomic programme - they were also working on atomic bombs, you see - we flew down to Nagasaki; we couldn't land at Hiroshima at that time. We landed on a dirt field and the Japanese commander of the base came out, looking for someone to surrender to. We were given old cars - 1927 Chevrolet models, or similar - to drive to the city centre, but they all broke down three times before getting into Nagasaki.

"There wasn't really anything that shocked us, though there is one thing [that has stayed with me]. The Japanese military was being broken up at the time and

one of the soldiers arrived on the bus looking for his home - but it had been destroyed. I remember looking at Tom Ferebee, and saying, 'You know, Tom, that could have been us if the war had gone the opposite way.' I didn't feel too good about dropping the bomb - but I didn't feel too bad about dropping it either. This was one man among many that were saved by dropping the bomb" - because it had precluded a full-scale invasion of Japan. "It was very important we saw that, and we both recognised how lucky we were."

Along with all the other Enola Gay crew, who have since passed away, Dutch Van Kirk has no regrets about dropping the atomic bomb, seeing it as the lesser of two evils. Asked whether he believes the result would have been the same - ie World War II would have been forced to end - if things 'had gone the opposite way' and Japan had dropped an atomic bomb on America first, there's a long pause, before Dutch responds, "No, I don't think so. I think we would have been more resilient."

But underneath the assured bravado of his reply, there's no getting around how long he had hesitated before he answered - or the fact that, like that atomic scientist who couldn't offer any certainties on Tinian back in 1945, he had used the word *think*.



If you'd like to read more about Dutch Van Kirk and his missions, *My True Course: Northumberland To Hiroshima* (by Suzanne Dietz) is available from www.amazon.com.

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3. Hiroshima
The Enola Gay reaches Hiroshima around 8am local time and releases the Little Boy bomb at 8.15am; it detonates 43 seconds later.

5. Nagasaki
Three days later, another bombing crew on board Bockscar departs Tinian to drop the Fat Man atomic bomb on Kokura, but due to overcast conditions they revert to their secondary target of Nagasaki.

1. Takeoff
The Enola Gay leaves North Field Airbase on the island of Tinian at 2.45am, along with three other B-29s: Plane #91, The Great Artiste and Top Secret.

2. Iwo Jima
The Enola Gay rendezvous with the observation planes over Iwo Jima, in the Volcano Island chain.

4. Tinian touchdown
After a 12-hour flight, the Enola Gay lands back at Tinian, where the crew are debriefed before going to bed.

• Cities hit
• Potential other targets

Origins and aftermath

The US started developing the nuclear bomb following a warning from Albert Einstein and other physicists in 1939 that the Germans were close to constructing their own. Project Manhattan got underway in 1941 and by July 1945 had successfully detonated the first-ever nuclear device in the Trinity test. By this point Germany had already surrendered so the Allied forces' sights were now trained solely on the last remaining Axis power: Japan. Having refused an ultimatum to surrender in the Potsdam Declaration, the Allies felt they were left with two options: a full-scale invasion or the use of nuclear bombs. They opted for the latter. It remains one of the most controversial military decisions ever taken, yet many argue that invading Japan would have claimed many more lives in the long term.



Little Boy produced a force equivalent to around 15,000 tons of TNT

© Corbis, Alamy





The fall of Baghdad

IRAQ, APRIL 2003

Written by Chris Fenton

“The American soldier thought a photographer in one of the rooms above had a gun and fired at him”

Dust and sand flew through the air on the road to Baghdad on another red-hot day in March 2003. Only a few cars were heading into the city; most of the traffic was trying to get as far away as possible. Åsne Seierstad was among the few making her way into Baghdad and recalls: “I’d managed to drive myself in [to Iraq] posing as an aid worker with the Norwegian Christian Council in January building water dams. But all journalist visas were revoked in the build-up to the war and I had to bribe someone with five thousand dollars to get another one.”

ÅSNE SEIERSTAD



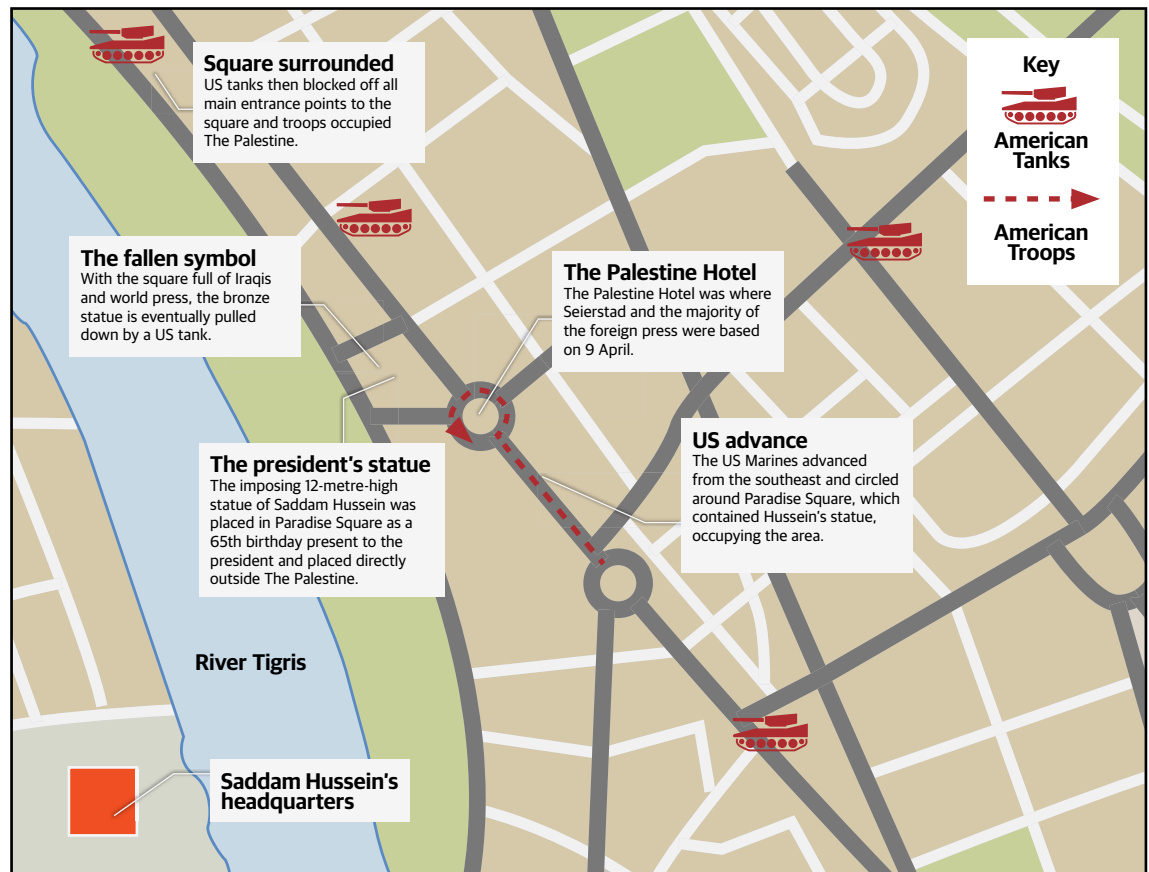
Åsne Seierstad is a Norwegian foreign affairs correspondent who has reported from

a number of war zones throughout the globe, including Afghanistan, Chechnya and Iraq, for various news agencies. She has written a number of books about everyday life in these places including the international bestseller *The Bookseller of Kabul*.

There had been debate among the ejected journalists who had assembled on the Jordanian border about whether to risk going back into Iraq with the war looming. Seierstad made the dangerous decision to re-enter the country because her news stories were not being reported on by the Iraqi information ministry: “They [the Iraqi government] would read the papers like *The Times* in their foreign embassies and report back, I was in a lucky situation because there was no embassy in

The fall of a symbol

- 03-00am CST** • **US marines take Saddam City, a suburb of Baghdad** 
- 07-00am** • **Iraqi forces flee**
All Iraqi security officials flee Paradise Square in Baghdad and with no government officials and uncertainty reigning, sporadic looting breaks out
- 11-00am** • **Press at The Palestine begin making their daily reports and report that troops are close to entering the city**
- 01-00pm** • **Rumours circulate that the Americans are hours away and the remaining world press begin reporting live**
- 04-30pm** • **Square taken**
A number of US tanks enter the square and begin taking up strategic defensive positions, although they meet little resistance
- 05-00pm** • **US commanders hear Iraqis want to topple Hussein's statue** 
- 05-10pm** • **A sledgehammer 'slips off' an American recovery vehicle in the square and is given to the crowd to topple the statue**
- 05-25pm** • **Interest in the statue begins to ebb away and the crowd begins to disperse as the statue refuses to fall**
- 05-30pm** • **Stars and Stripes**
A US soldier puts an American flag onto the statue 
- 05-40pm** • **A US Army psychological warfare unit arrives and tells the marines to take down the American flag and put up an Iraqi one**
- 05-45pm** • **The US marine colonel in charge feels he would be a 'buzzkill' if he didn't help the crowd pull down the statue and orders the 88 to help**
- 05-50pm** • **Dictator toppled**
The US tank crew is given the green light to bring down the statue. It falls shortly afterwards, acting as a symbol of the fall of Saddam Hussein in Iraq



Norway so I could get a visa."

As the war officially started on 19 March through 'shock and awe', the American military advanced at breakneck speed towards Baghdad, leap-frogging Iraqi defenses in an effort to end the conflict as quickly as possible. Seierstad was now in the middle of key Hussein-regime targets at the heart of Baghdad, including the presidential palace complex and ministry buildings essential to the war. She was doing her best to conduct interviews with Iraqi civilians and says: "As the war started, there was still total control of the population by the regime. It was strange, in the nights they [the Americans] would bomb and during the day it was daily life. The people were ordered out, they were not allowed not to go to work and the schools were open."

The oppressive restrictions imposed on the lives of the Baghdadi citizens also applied to foreign journalists. Every step Seierstad took in the city was monitored by Hussein's Ba'ath party information officials. After a particularly heavy night of bombing she managed to convince her minders to let her speak to some school children in downtown Baghdad: "The children talked in propaganda speak, 'we're not scared, we are Iraqis for the president'. Interestingly, very small children, because they were outside of this propaganda, talked about fear and their greatest fear was to lose a parent or to be covered by sand or concrete from collapsing buildings."

"It was strange, in the nights they [the Americans] would bomb and during the day it was daily life"

The Americans finally entered the city on 8 April and were pushing towards Seierstad's hotel, The Palestine, situated outside Paradise Square, known to the locals as Firdos Square. The Palestine was at the heart of Baghdad and a key American objective. It was also where Hussein's imposing 12-metre statue of himself was located, which served as a symbol of his power within the city. Seierstad recalled: "They came in from the south and just took that part of the city. There was no real fighting, the Iraqi officials and security agents just fled - there was some sporadic fighting but no real resistance."

That afternoon Seierstad was working on a news story in her hotel room when she heard a loud crashing noise and felt the whole building shake. American tanks on a bridge close to The Palestine had fired a tank round into the building: "I heard a big boom, I got a telephone call to say that the hotel had been hit - the American soldier thought a photographer in one of the rooms above had a gun and fired at him." She ran down the hotel stairs to get out of the building and watched as bodies were being carried out: "We saw people being carried out under blankets. I think there were two or three people killed in the blast."

The next morning Seierstad ventured downstairs to start trying to find out what had happened the day before. She immediately realised that all the Iraqi soldiers, officials and regime thugs had disappeared.



American Marines Corps prepare to enter one of Saddam Hussein's palaces in Baghdad a month after the invasion

Even the hotel staff had left - there was no one around to serve breakfast. The assembled media representatives left in the hotel then heard the rumblings of distant tank tracks and gathered on the balconies overlooking Paradise Square. The Americans had finally arrived: "The big takeover came when they [the Americans] came in with their big tanks straight into Paradise Square with the statue, near The Palestine."

After the Americans had taken up defensive positions at the square's junctions Seierstad ventured outside and into the square: "I was there the whole time with three Iraqi friends, two guys and a girl, watching the Americans." News networks would later report that thousands of people had gathered to watch the Americans topple Hussein's statue, but Seierstad remembers differently and insists: "I would have to say only a few people were around, maybe 100 or 200, it wasn't at all crowded." As the Americans moved in some of the Iraqis began climbing on the statue, trying to bring it down: "There was a big muscular Iraqi guy like a body builder showing off on the statue. He had a rope - I'm not sure if the Americans had given it to him - which he had round the statue's neck."

The crowd began to throw rocks at the statue, which left the Americans unsure how best to react. Gunnery Sergeant Leon Lambert, tank commander of a US Marine M-88 recovery vehicle in the square asked his Captain if they should help the crowd tear down the statue. The initial answer given to him was "no way" but after the crowd began to ebb away and the presence of the media started to make itself known, the decision was made to help the crowd.

Seierstad and her three Iraqi friends continued to watch the events and she explains: "Some American soldiers climbed up and put an American flag on his head but then took it down and tied a rope around his neck onto one of their tanks." The crowd cheered as Lambert's vehicle revved up and began pulling the statue down. Seierstad recalls: "Even with the tank it took several minutes to get the thing down. Once it was down you had Iraqis jumping on his head and someone had a hammer and was hitting it."

Once the statue was down and the cheers from the crowd erupted, Seierstad began taking reactions from her Iraqi friends: "So many people had reasons to be happy that he was gone and one of the guys I was with was crying out of joy, he was Shia and he was crying out for joy that the dictatorship was over." This was contrasted with her second male friend who was crying for a completely different reason, "The other one was a

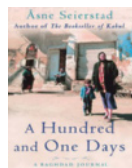


US forces began the second Gulf War with the military operation 'shock and awe'

Sunni and he was crying out of shame. 'How could the Americans do this to us? They took over our country!' In time the two men would become enemies."

Finally, she turned to her female friend to ask her for her reactions: "I asked her, what do you feel? She said, 'I do not feel anything, I don't dare to feel anything.'" The segregation of Iraqi society, which would plague the quest for peace in the country for the next decade, had already begun. With the statue down and the Americans setting up command posts all over the city, Seierstad gauged the mood of the Baghdad citizens: "I think for many people it was like, he's gone, we should have done it ourselves but he's gone. I think they hoped that everything was going to be fine and the Americans would help. That day there was joy in the streets."

During Seierstad's last days in the city she witnessed the aftermath of the fall of Baghdad. The destruction of Hussein's statue symbolised the removal of his oppressive rule in the country. But with this oppression gone, anarchy and looting spilled out onto the streets. The only building being guarded around the clock by the American force was the Iraqi oil ministry. She saw Iraqis pleading with American soldiers to protect them: "Many people would run up to the Americans and say 'protect us, protect us, we can't sleep at night because of the criminals that are coming.' The American soldiers would reply, 'That's none of our business.' They had planned for war, they hadn't planned for peace."



A Hundred and One Days, Åsne Seierstad's time in Iraq, including the origins and aftermath of the Paradise Square incident, is chronicled in *A Hundred and One Days*, available now at www.amazon.co.uk.

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Origins and aftermath

The origins of the second Iraq war can be found in the tense political situation after the 9/11 attacks in 2001. US president George W. Bush declared a 'war on terror' and singled out Iraq, among other countries, as a hotbed of terrorist activities. It was widely thought by US and UK intelligence agencies that Saddam Hussein, the Iraqi dictator, was harbouring weapons of mass destruction. While these claims were never proved and Bush's case for war was defeated in the UN, he took the decision to invade Iraq anyway, beginning operations on 20 March 2003. In its aftermath, mass looting and criminal activity swept through Baghdad as the US refused to get involved in civil policing. The only guarded building was the oil ministry, lending weight to suspicions that the war was an excuse for the Bush administration to take over Iraq's oil concerns.



The falling of the statue was seen live by millions across the world

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